GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
3 5212 00 176887 8

WESTERN EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
PORTLAND, OREGON

Gift H.C. Ryan

THE SERMON BIBLE

THE SERMON BIBLE

I PETER—REVELATION

NEW YORK
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LAFAYETTE PLACE

1900

PORTLAND CENTER LIBRARY
GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
PORTLAND, OREGON 97223

LIBRARY

4225
.S4
v.12

INTRODUCTION.

THE articles in the *Expositor* by Professor Lumby on 1 and 2 St. Peter are specially valuable. He has written a commentary on these books for the "Expositor's Bible." Dr. Maclaren has contributed some outlines to the "Speaker's Commentary." On St. John's epistles suggestive expositions are those of Dr. Plummer and the Bishop of Derry. The commentary of Rothe on the First Epistle is translated in the *Expository Times*. F. D. Maurice's work is well known. Dr. Plummer has written for the "Expositor's Bible" a good commentary on St. Jude. The best popular works on the Revelation are those of Dr. Milligan, Dean Vaughan, and Bishop Boyd-Carpenter (in Ellicott's Commentary).

06660

I. PETER.

Chap. i., vers. 1, 2.

I. Election in its source: "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."

II. Election in its means: "elect through sanctification of the Spirit." (1) Election first shows itself in a man's separation from the world, which lieth in wickedness. (2) But more than separation from or nonconformity to the world is here intended: the moral purification of our nature. (3) The wording of the text leads us still further: this holiness is not a limited, circumscribed result of the inward operation of the Spirit, but an infusion into our nature of the very quality or attribute of holiness inherent in Himself.

III. Election in its end: "elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1) Election has for its object our obedience, obedience in a twofold sense: (*a*) the obedience of faith; (*b*) the obedience which faith produces. (2) The sprinkling of the blood is necessary not only at the beginning of the Christian career, but all along to the very end.

J. C. Jones, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 1.

References: i. 1, 2.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 283; J. S. Howson, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 259.

Chap. i., ver. 2.—"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Who would take happy views of religion, whoever would have full assurance of his own salvation, must be accustomed to look for his evidences, not in himself, nor in any abstract truth, but in the character, and the work, and the person of God. In this respect, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity is a very tower of confidence and strength to a Christian. The offices of the Holy Three are so full, they so fit into each other and make a harmony, they are so appropriate, each in its distinctness,

and they are so sufficient, all in their completeness, that they seem made for this very purpose: to assure a man's soul and to leave no place for the weakest doubt.

I. The beginning, the foundation, of the whole scheme of salvation, is the electing grace of the Father. The election of the saved ranges without the slightest reprobation of the lost; and the right application of the doctrine is always an application of comfort. So St. Peter here implies, in like manner St. Paul, always to strengthen and assure, and stir up to holiness, afflicted Churches and tried believers.

II. Look at the path which election takes, by which it always travels, without which it is no election at all: "through sanctification of the Spirit." The great object of all election is the glory of God. The glory of God is a happy, holy thing, the reflection of Himself. The Spirit carries on His sanctifying work by implanting a new life, new principles, with new affections, within a man's breast, which then act with a threefold influence. First, they occupy the heart; then they keep down and restrain the evil that was and still is there; and then they gather up and absorb the bad nature, purify and elevate it towards the character of the Divine: this is sanctification.

III. "Obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ." In that obedience we were elected; for it we were created in Christ Jesus; God willed it, God purposed it, and God means it.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 5th series, p. 294.

REFERENCES: i. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 434; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 194.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

To the question, What has the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead done for us Christians? a great many answers may be given.

I. Of these the answer which is, perhaps, of the first importance, the answer which Christ's own Apostles would have given, is this: that by rising from the dead Jesus Christ proved that He had a right to speak about God, a right to speak about the old religion of His countrymen, a right to speak about the religious conduct of the most influential classes among His countrymen; above all, that He had a right to speak about

Himself as He had spoken. When He was asked to give a sign—that is, a something which might be accepted as evidence—of the commission which He had from heaven, He gave this: He said that just as the old prophet Jonah had been buried out of sight in the whale, and yet had been restored to his ministry and to his countrymen, so He Himself, though He should be stricken beneath the pangs and convulsions of death, though laid in the darkness of the tomb in the very heart of the earth, yet would at a given time burst the fetters of the grave and would rise again. Accordingly, when this prediction had been actually realised, the fact was appealed to, as we see from the Acts of the Apostles, by the earliest preachers of Christianity, almost in every single sermon. It was the fact which evidently did their work, in compelling men to listen to what they had to say about their risen Lord and in making faith in Him at least easy, better than any other topic; and St. Paul puts it forward when he begins his great Epistle to the Romans by simply saying that Jesus had been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

II. But the Resurrection has done other things for us besides this its great evidential achievement. It has endowed Christians, who treat it as a serious matter of fact, with the grace, the great grace, of hope. St. Peter feels the preciousness of this when he exclaims that God, the Father of our Lord, is blessed, if only because, from His abundant mercy, He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by His Son's resurrection from the dead. No man who has not a clear belief in a future life can have permanently a strong sense of duty. A man may, indeed, persuade himself during various periods of his existence that this sense of duty is the better and purer from not being bribed by the promise of future reward or stimulated, as he would perhaps say, unhealthily by the dread of future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life, if he has not an eternal future before him, is, depend upon it, feeble and impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action; it is that he has a false estimate, because an under-estimate, of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the bearing, the instincts, and the sense of noble birth and lofty destiny which properly belong to him. He is like the heir to a great name or a throne who is bent on forgetting his lineage and responsibilities in a self-sought degra-

dation. Man cannot, even if he would, live with impunity only as a more accomplished kind of animal than are the creatures around him. Man is by the terms of his existence a being of eternity, and he cannot unmake himself; he cannot take up a position which abdicates his higher prerogatives without sooner or later sinking into degradations which are in themselves a punishment. He needs a hope resting on something beyond the sphere of sense and time, and God has given him one by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

III. There are three forms of interest which must be accorded to such a fact as the Resurrection. The first is the interest of curiosity in a wonder which is altogether at variance with the course of nature. This interest may exist in a high degree, observing and registering the fact, yet never for a moment getting beyond the fact. Then there is the interest of active reason which is satisfied that such a fact must have consequences, and is anxious to trace them, an interest which may lead a man to say that the Resurrection does, intellectually speaking, prove the truth of the mission of Christ, although the man may know nothing of the power of Christ's blood and of His Spirit. The third kind of interest is practical, moral, spiritual. It is an effort to answer the question, What does Christ's resurrection say to me? what does it mean to me? If it is true, if Christianity through it is true, what ought to be the effect on my thoughts, my feelings, my life? And St. Peter would answer all these questions. Thought, feeling, life, should be invigorated by the force of that living hope. But then this absorbing moral interest does not come of any ordinary process of observation and reason, like these two earlier forms. St. Peter says, using a remarkable expression, "We are begotten unto a lively hope." It is not the outcome of our natural mind or of common-sense, though it does not contradict it; it is the product of the Divine breath playing upon the soul and giving it the new birth, the new capacity for life. Of this birth the Father is the Author; the Eternal Spirit is the instrument; union with Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, the essence and the effect. H. P. LIDDON, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 309.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—"Hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

THE Hope of the Resurrection.

The religion of Jesus Christ presented one great contrast to the heathen religions with which it found itself in conflict: it

pointed steadily forward, while they looked wistfully backward. The religions of classical heathenism were religions of regret; the Gospel is a religion of hope. Two great ideas are involved in the fact of the Resurrection, ideas influencing human thought and action at every turn, ideas coextensive in their application with human life itself.

I. By opening out the vista of an endless future, it has wholly changed the proportions of things. The capacity of looking forward is the measure of progress in the individual and in the race. Providence is God's attribute. In proportion as a man appropriates this attribute of God, in proportion as his faculty of foresight is educated, in the same degree is he raised in the moral scale. The Christian is an advance on the civilised man, as the civilised man is an advance on the barbarian. His vista of knowledge and interest is not terminated abruptly by the barrier of the grave. The Resurrection has stimulated the faculty and educated the habit of foresight indefinitely by opening out to it an endless field of vision over which its sympathies range.

II. The Resurrection involves another principle not less extensive or less potent in its influence on human life. The Resurrection does not merely proclaim immortality. It declares likewise that death leads to life; it assures us that death is the portal to eternity. Thus it glorifies death; it crowns and consecrates the grave. Death issuing in life, death the seed and life the plant, and blossom, and fruit—this is the great lesson of the Gospel.

III. See how far-reaching are the applications of this lesson to human life. Through darkness to light, through sorrow to joy, through suffering to bliss, through evil to good—this is the law of our heavenly Father's government, whereby He would educate His family, His sons and His daughters, into the likeness of His own perfections. Accordingly we find this same principle extending throughout the Gospel teaching. Everywhere it speaks of renewal, of redemption, of restitution—yes, of resurrection.

IV. So to the true Christian all the ills of life have an inherent glory in them. Not only do they deserve our pity, deserve our respect, deserve our alleviation. There is a great potentiality of future good in them. No degradation of human character, no abasement of human life, no depth of human vice, is so great as to forfeit its claim to the consideration of the Christian. How can it forfeit this claim when hope is

shut out from none, restitution is denied to none? It was the common taunt of the heathen against the Christians in the early ages that they gathered about them the lowest of the people, the outcasts of society, the scum of mankind. They proudly accepted the reproach; they avowed that their shame was their glory. Had not their Master been taunted with the companionship of publicans and sinners? Was it not their special mission, as it had been His before them, to call not righteous men, but sinners?

J. B. LIGHTFOOT, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 233.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 376; W. Hubbard, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., p. 163; M. G. Pearse, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 85.

Chap. i., vers. 3, 4.

THE Lively Hope.

I. Whence does it spring? Hope is popularly defined to be the expectation of future good; but, to render the definition complete, the good should be an object which the mind affects and which the heart desires. It has been implanted in the breast of universal man, and is one of the chiefest displays of the loving-kindness of the Lord. Without it the world were a sepulchre and the conscience a hell. There is hardly a condition of human adversity which it cannot soothe and sweeten. But the hope to which the text refers is not an instinct. It is a gift, and is not, therefore, the common heritage of all mankind; it is the hope of heaven, which the world knoweth not, and to which the sinner is of necessity a stranger. Such a hope can only be of Divine bestowment; it is at once too lofty and too lasting to come from meaner hands. And it *is* the gift of God to those who receive the Gospel of His Son.

II. What is the medium by which this hope is certified to us? The Apostle says it is "by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." The resurrection of Jesus is fitly put here for His whole atoning work, as it is at once the proof of the reality and completeness of His death as a sacrifice and the token of its acceptance as a satisfaction by the justice of the Father.

III. Note the recompense in which this hope of the Christian is fulfilled: "to an inheritance." The word at once traces the blessing to its source, and humbles at the outset all the vapourings of human pride. An inheritance is neither reward of industry nor meed of valour. Believers cannot purchase heaven. They may not win its honours, as a knight his spurs, by bravery; they are heirs because of their sonship, and their

sonship is by adoption of grace. Boasting is excluded, and gratitude inspired by the boundless love of God. (1) This inheritance is incorruptible; it does not contain the seeds of dissolution. (2) It is undefiled. Herein is the secret of its incorruptibility. (3) It fadeth not away. There comes upon it no whisper of a change. There will be neither consuming memories nor boding fears. Once pass the portals of the inheritance, and you are safe for ever.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 80.

Chap. i., vers. 3-5.

THE Heavenly Inheritance.

I. The greatness of God's mercy is to be seen in the great number of the saved.

II. The greatness of God's mercy is to be seen in the great change which takes place in the great multitude.

III. The greatness of God's mercy is to be seen in the greatness of the inheritance which He confers on the great multitude which have undergone the great change.

IV. The greatness of God's mercy is to be seen in the greatness of the expense to which He went to be able to confer this great inheritance on the great multitude that have undergone the change.

V. The greatness of God's mercy is to be seen, lastly, in the greatness of the power that is pledged to bring the great multitude to the possession of the inheritance secured for them at such a cost.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 15.

REFFRENCES: i. 3-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 948; W. Boyd-Carpenter, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 263; *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 267; F. D. Huntingdon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 232. i. 4.—W. Marshall, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 315; *Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iv, p. 375. i. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 222.

Chap. i., vers. 6, 7.

THE Theology of Suffering.

I. Temptations or trials reveal faith. (1) Trials, on the one hand, show us the evil that is in us. (2) Afflictions further serve to evoke our good, to lead forth into visibility the faith, the hope, and the charity God, in His loving-kindness, has infused into our souls.

II. Temptations or trials strengthen faith. (1) Bitters are the best tonic for the spiritual man, as for the physical;

(2) sorrows further invigorate faith because they call it into frequent, yea constant, exercise.

III. Temptations or trials purify faith. (1) Trials release it from the impurities attached to it; (2) adversity throws faith more upon its proper resources, making it draw its aliment and inspiration more directly from God, from God as revealed in His book.

IV. Temptations or trials beautify faith.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 29.

REFERENCES: i. 6, 7.—R. W. Dale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxv., p. 102 i. 6-9.—H. S. Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 230. i. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 317; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 147.

Chap. i., ver. 8.—"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

LOVE a Way to Faith.

I. Love to Christ is the usual way to faith, both to belief in His reality and trust in Him. Of course I do not question that men may attain to faith through investigation. Inquiry and search cannot be otherwise than favourable to faith; what I mean is this: that for men in general, for men and women of all sorts, *the* way that leads through love to faith is the practical, the usual, the reasonable, and the sufficient one. In the Gospels Christ is presented specially and directly in a way to awaken love rather than to meet the questions of the reason. The great qualities of Christ have the effect of rousing some answering feelings in the souls of men. Every truly elevated life has such an influence, and that of Christ in an altogether peculiar and transcendent manner.

II. Let us notice one or two inferences from this line of thought. We see how love to an unseen Christ operates in keeping Him near to the soul in spite of the lapse of centuries. It seems at first sight as if it would be well-nigh impossible to resist the influence of time. It has such a dissolving power; all things crumble before it. But when souls love Christ and are in constant fellowship with Him, what matters the first century or the nineteenth? There are humble, earnest souls to-day in myriads that feel Christ more real and near than many who had seen Him in the flesh. How finely the natural and the spiritual blend in love to Christ. There are those who never seem to get beyond the natural. They love Christ

as they love any great benefactor of the world. And who can tell just precisely when his love to Christ rose out of this sphere and became spiritual, or when any such love becomes spiritual, aspiring, and active? There are those who do not take the name of Christ, or call Him Master, who have an enthusiasm for Him that might make many Christians blush and bring tears to their eyes. Can any men draw the line between the natural and the spiritual, and say, Here the natural ends, and the spiritual begins? Is not all this love to good and right at bottom ultimately a love to God, if only it knew itself? Is not the immense power that Christ has over the natural admiration of men one of His own greatest weapons and one of the things which the Spirit of God most uses?

J. LECKIE, *Sermons*, p. 147.

Chap. i., ver. 8.—"Whom having not seen, ye love."

LOVING the Invisible Christ.

The place occupied by any on the ledge of fame and genius is very narrow indeed. Forgetfulness soon grows over us, and we are less than shadows after the sun has passed. "I am clean forgotten," says Swift, "as a dead man, out of mind and out of loving hearts." Contrast this with the influence of the unseen Christ. "By His death," Paul says, "we see the resurrection and ascension." Not only is our Lord Jesus Christ known to countless millions, but He is loved wherever He is known. The proof of love is sacrifice. The martyrs have been dying for Christ for over eighteen hundred years. The noble army is added to year after year by fresh recruits ready to seal with their own blood their devotion to Christ. On our university classes and Toynbee Hall Christ looks down from His holy heaven, and strikes into life and arouses the chivalry and enthusiasm of those who work in the mission field of the East of London. This is a power we cannot but love. Amongst those who have never seen Him, Christ has power to perpetuate His love through all ages. The first Napoleon, who trusted rather to the effect of his own fascination, awoke to the continued fascination of the love of Christ, and said, "I am a judge of men, but I tell you that this was more than a man." That was Napoleon's commentary upon St. Peter's words, "Whom having not seen, ye love." Let me point to two applications.

I. The text lies at the heart and root of the whole Christian life. Remember the Epistle and portion of Scripture for St.

Barnabas's Day. A great writer has told us, in his own picturesque way, that Antioch was the capital of vice, the sewer of all sorts of infamies, the house of moral and spiritual putrefaction; yet the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. It is a solemn time when a new influence gets its name, for the name is a distinct sign of separate existence. Many will in all probability say that that was the name by which believers were known to the Roman police. But this step was now taken; they were now no longer merely disciples, brethren, saints, and believers, but Christians. It may be that, as we have been told, the name was founded upon the misconception that Christ was a proper name; but, at all events, ten years after the Resurrection and Ascension our Lord's disciples called themselves by the name of One whom they loved, and that name will never die—that beautiful, that worthy, name by which we are called. Yes, save in the Gospels, there is no authentic likeness of Christ by one who had seen Him. In the long, worn features seen in the Lateran mosaics many Christians are able to perceive the hands and feet, the wounded side, and the awful circle of the crown of thorns; among all the pictures in galleries, and in all its forms, the crucifix stands out in distinct isolation, as if challenging the attention of those who believe the Gospel story; but none can claim to be the original and authentic likeness of Jesus, the Son of Mary and the Son of God. And yet, said St. Barnabas, that name of Jesus is not the name of a man, but of One who is true, gentle, pure, holy, and sympathising, and who is also the true and Eternal God. This idea, in all the Gospel and creeds, is fixed again and again by the reign of the Holy Ghost upon the sensitive plate of the human heart, and is a proof of the reality of the object which it represents: "Whom having not seen, ye love."

II. The text no doubt affords a personal test: "Whom having not seen, ye love." People are all too ready to put to others trisyllabic questions to which they must have monosyllabic answers. "Are you saved?" "Yes." Another question put in this form is, "Do you love Jesus?" That is a question to put to ourselves rather than to others. Imitate the sensitive delicacy of St. Peter in our text. He tells us we have not seen Christ, but he had seen Him in the guest-chamber, on the long summer evenings by the lake of Galilee, and it is an exceedingly reverential statement to make when he says, "Whom having not seen, ye love." Do we love

Jesus? The answer, after all, does not depend upon what we say. Who does not remember that sublime passage in dramatic literature where the aged king intends to make a trial of the love of his three daughters? Two of them, when asked if they loved him, heaped word upon word, hyperbole upon hyperbole. The third was the one alone whose heart was richer than her tongue. Who loved the old man best of all? We can read the answer upon the heath where the old man's form stands out in the flashing lightning, and his white hair is drifted by the storm. Our answer to the question is to be measured not by what we say, not by what we think we are enabled to do, but by what we do when the hour of trial comes.

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 89.

REFERENCES: i. 8.—A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, p. 335; *Homilist*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 107; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 72.

Chap. i., vers. 8, 9.

SALVATION: its Subjective Elements.

I. Faith. (1) Faith is the first Christian grace; (2) faith is a personal trust in a personal Saviour; (3) faith is trust in an invisible Saviour.

II. Love. (1) Love is one essential element of the Christian religion; (2) Christ claims and gets our supreme love; (3) these strangers of the dispersion evinced their love to the Saviour by suffering themselves to be despoiled of all their possessions rather than deny Him.

III. Joy. This joy defies philosophy to explain it, or language to express it. It is already glorified or full of glory.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 50.

REFERENCES: i. 8, 9.—F. Ferguson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiii., p. 193; A. Rowland, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxiv., p. 88; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 120; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 698.

Chap. i., vers. 10-12.

I. THE prophets are an example to us in the study of salvation—(1) in the intention of their study; (2) in the subject of their study; (3) in the noble spirit of resignation they evinced in presence of intellectual difficulties which they were not able to surmount.

II. The Apostles are examples to us in the proclamation of the Gospel—(1) in subject matter; (2) in manner of preaching; (3) in the power which accompanied their preaching.

III. The angels are examples to us in the wonder and adoration that should fill our minds in the contemplation of this salvation.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 71.

REFERENCE: i. 10-12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1524.

Chap. i., ver. 11.—"The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

THE Suffering which Fruits in Glory.

I. The sufferings of Christ. From what source did they spring? What was their deepest and most essential characteristic? There will be many answers. (1) They were vicarious; (2) they were extreme; (3) they were unmerited; (4) they were according to the will of God.

II. The glory that should follow. Language and imagination alike stagger in the Apocalypse under the revelation. It is called the glory of the Father, the glory at which the Father has been aiming through all the sin and sorrow of the world, for the sake of which He saw Eden broken up and the pall of sin settling over the earth. It is the glory which God saw beyond all the unutterable anguish of the great experiment of freedom, and which we shall behold, if we believe in Him who hath overcome the world, in the day of the manifestation of the Cross.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 243.

REFERENCE: i. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 199.

Chap. i., ver. 12.—"Which things the angels desire to look into."

ADVENT Tidings.

Our text speaks of angel students, and it speaks of them as being engaged in their eager and, if I may use the word of such high, and blessed, and holy intelligences, in their curious, research; for in the original the term which is translated "desire to look into" conveys the idea of bending, stooping over, in order that they may eagerly peer into those subjects which are the objects of their investigation. Those subjects are the great Advent tidings.

I. The Apostle first brings before us those Advent tidings, or this Gospel report, in its great aim of salvation. This is the keynote of the passage—salvation first introduced to us, not in its primary stages, not in those stages of salvation which some of us are now enjoying, and which are within the reach, through God's mercy, of all of us, but salvation in its consummation.

Never take a low view of this term "salvation." Remember that, while the salvation which you are called upon to seek is a salvation from the masterful tyranny of the devil, and of the world, and of indwelling sin, the crown of salvation, the full accomplishment and development of salvation, is never attained until the body is glorified by its resurrection at the second coming of the Lord. And this is the salvation of which the text speaks.

II. And mark again that we not only have the great aim of these Advent tidings, but we have also their great characteristic. The great characteristic is presented to us by the Apostle when he says, "the grace that should come unto you." Grace in this particular phase is love: love to the guilty; love to the fallen; love to those who have forfeited all right and title to God's favour. There is a combination of characteristics in the Gospel which shows how it bears the stamp of adaptation to our wants, while it bears the impress of the mind of Deity. It is the wonderful combination of depth and simplicity. There is such a combination of depth and simplicity in the Gospel that I may sit down to study it with an angel for my fellow-student, or I may sit down to teach it with a little child for my pupil.

J. C. MILLER, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 617.

REFERENCES: i. 12.—T. J. Crawford, *The Preaching of the Cross*, p. 38; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 131; vol. xiii., p. 321.

Chap. i., ver. 13.—"Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you."

HOPE.

I. Christian hope, as St. Peter tells us, is seated in God. It is, as it has been called, one of the triad of virtues specifically theological. It takes its stand on Divine revelation; it looks on to the attainment of Divine promises; it draws its life-blood from no mere surmise as to what is possible for humanity in the race at large or in the individual, but from the manifestation of Divine truth and goodness in the Incarnate, whom St. Paul in one passage calls our hope, because our hope is grounded on Him and centred in Him. St. Paul, indeed, cannot think of hope without thinking of Christ.

II. A hope which is thus essentially religious, thus Christian, from the root upwards, and impossible except on the terms of Christian belief, is strong enough to face all facts, even such as are unwelcome or austere. Life must, after all, be taken seriously;

the hope which is a Christian's privilege involves a wakeful collectedness of mind. When trial comes we are not to say, "It is more than we bargained for," but rather, "We were duly forewarned." Certainly there will be temptations to unhopefulness; there must be the discipline of hopes deferred, of successes marred, of apparent defeats and disappointments, of much that might tempt impatience to despair. A hope thus trained, while resting on august realities, is strong, because it is not fanciful.

III. Hope is a great instrument of moral and spiritual discipline. The hope which maketh not ashamed is always humble and always active. It remembers the terms of its existence: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 141.

Chap. i., ver. 13.—"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

THE Christian's Hope.

I. First of all, let us deal with this very remarkable statement: "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Now, there are two or three very large principles which will come, I think, out of a careful observation of the theology of these words; and the first of them is this: "the grace that is to be brought to us." I don't want to deal with theological technicalities; but we all know in the common language of religious life and education, as well as in the language of scientific phraseology, that the grace is distinct from the glory, in the same way as we distinguish the present from the future. It is here obvious that the thing which the Apostle is speaking about is on the other side of the grave, because he tells us that it is the constant object of our hope. And thus he tells us that it is all involved in the revelation of Jesus Christ, and that it is definitely fixed when He shall come to be manifest in His saints and glorified in them that believe. This grace, undeserved by us, rises from the deep fountain and artesian well of His own nature. It is grace when He comes to you and me and forgives us our sins; it is grace when into our broken feebleness step by step, according to our capacity, He infuses and communicates His own strength in temptation, and gives us hope in sorrow and triumph in conflict; and it is grace when our palm-bearing hands shall be folded in rest, and the fight shall be behind us, and the

victory in our hearts. Then we shall sit down, with the Saviour who has overcome, in the kingdom, and dwell there.

II. And then there is the other side. He would have us hope—it is a somewhat unusual and yet perfectly significant word—he would have us distinctly comprehend that that which is the object of our hope, whatsoever superlative degree of brightness and of wonderfulness we may attain to, is in essence and in kind the very same as the feeble beginnings and dull communications of love and goodness which we get from God here. The golden thread of unity ties together all the experiences and all the possessions of a redeemed man, from the first moment of the change that delivers him from the kingdom of darkness right away on through the endless pulses of an unbroken eternity. Grace is glory in the bud ; glory is grace in the flower ; and all which we hope for in the future is but the evolving of that which is planted in our hearts to-day if we love God, though it may have to fight with much antagonism to itself both without us and within. The grace comes all from the one source ; and glory is but the superlative degree of that of which we already have possession.

III. And then there is another point which I wish to make about the simple language used concerning this great object of Christian hope, which also you will find, I have no doubt, in the Revised Version—about the grace that our Bible says is "to be brought." The original has it literally and strictly rendered, "the grace which is *being* brought." If I remember rightly, it was the saintly Archbishop whose commentary on this Epistle of Peter will always be held in great esteem and respected as honest and sound—I mean Archbishop Leighton—who rendered it, "the grace that grows, that has a being." It is being brought, it is on its road, as if some strong choir of angels had already left the throne and were coming towards us, and, like those who bear the Holy Grail, were flitting nearer and nearer and nearer to us ; with all the power of the strong winds and the wave lifting them on, it is bearing down upon us as a ship at sea ; travelling to us, it has already set out, as light has done years ago, from the far-off stars, and is on its road to us through the great abysses, and presently it will strike with sunshine against the darkling surface of this dull earth. It is the grace that is being brought to us floating down through the ages, the one great, far-off, Divine fact to which the whole creation is moving. And so let us cherish the solemn thought that it is ready to be revealed, and that it is coming to us

with every pulse of diminishing time, with every grain of the past running out of the sand-glass; the day of the Lord is hastening on its course.

IV. This grace perfected, which is on its way to us, is given to us all, involved and implicated, or, to put it into plainer words, wrapped up—as the literal rendering would be—in the revelation, the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. When He comes, it comes. The two things are twisted together, like the fair jewel set in a golden setting is surrounded by stones and pearls; so for us our grace is all included in that encyclopædiacal glory the manifestation of Jesus Christ Himself. When He who is our Life shall be manifested, says the other Apostle, then shall we also appear, shall be manifested, with Him in glory.

V. And notice the brief reference to the quality of the hope which you and I have to cherish. You cannot build a fortress-home of hope in the future when you have nothing but the uncertain external foundation to build upon; but here is a rock for us. What rock? My Master's word. Here is another rock. What rock? My Father's character; and on this, and most of all, I believe, upon that historical fact that our Brother Christ hath died and risen again and is ascended up on high, we may build with absolute certainty the fair fabric of a perfect hope, erected upon a rock, and may have done with "peradventures" and "may-bes" and change them into "verily, verily." He says that of us, and we believe that is true. Wherefore set your hopes on Christ, that you may prove all things. "Gird up the loins of your mind"—*i.e.*, brace up yourselves to make an effort that is not an easy one; for there are plenty of difficulties in the way of any man keeping the light of hope burning in the watch-tower through the darkness of the night and the fury of the storm. "Gird up the loins of your mind"; fix your attention and concentrate your thoughts on the points on which the hopes are built. No man can cherish any hope about any poor miserable thing in this world unless he keeps thinking about it; and no Christian man or woman can cherish hopes for another world unless they keep thinking about it, and you cannot keep thinking about it without a dead lift of faith.

A. MACLAREN, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 553.

CHRISTIAN Hope.

I. Hope in its auxiliary conditions: girding up the loins and being sober.

II. Hope in its operation: "Hope perfectly unto the end." (1) Hope is natural to the human mind, nothing more natural; (2) we must persevere in the face of difficulties, however great, for he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

III. Hope in its immutable foundation. (1) Our hope is based on Divine grace as brought to us in the past at the first revelation of Jesus Christ; (2) fresh supplies of grace are being brought for us in the present; (3) our hope looks forward to the future. J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 94.

Chap. i., ver. 13.—"Gird up the loins of your mind."

THE Place of Mind in Religion.

The phrase may have lost something of its picturesqueness in its transfer from the East to the West and from the first century of the Gospel to the nineteenth. But if St. Peter stood amongst us at this moment here in England, in London, at the exact point of thought and talk and writing which is our position to-day, I doubt if he could find a word of counsel more suitable or more suggestive than that which speaks in this brief text: "Gird up the loins of your mind." What can be more striking than St. Peter's application of this figure to minds, and to minds in their religious aspect? He sets before us the figure of an ungirt, untidy, slovenly mind, and bids us beware of it in ourselves as religious men and Christians. One thing is presupposed; St. Peter counts it self-evident: that mind has place in the things of God. St. Peter does not fear the too much mind, but the too little. What St. Peter dreads is the half-mind; what he rebukes is the slovenly, the untidy, the dissolute mind. He does not fear the practised, the disciplined, the intense intellect. He bids the mind gird itself up as for a task requiring all its exertion, a task desperate without it. Mind has place in the things of God, and must gird itself up to handle them. Just in proportion as it is earnest and active, it will know and keep its place. Let us try to sketch one or two of the particulars of that girding of the text.

I. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a weaned child on the breast of its mother." Humility, queen of graces towards God and man, but chief element of that mind-girding which is our subject. Gird up the loins of your mind, first of all, by a deep humility. "Thou art near, they tell me, O Lord; but I am so far off—so ignorant, so stupid, so sin-bound—oh quicken me."

II. But next to it I would place its sister grace, which is patience, that Divine ὑπομονή of which we speak so often, made up of two ingredients: submissive waiting, that upward look which acknowledges dependence and that onward look which believes in eternity, which knows that with the Lord a thousand years are as one day, which therefore is "willing to wait." Be willing to wait, not indolently, not in indifference, not as those who wrap themselves in their virtue or wrap themselves in their faith, careless of the multitude, careless of the race, but in the twofold definition of the grace which we are magnifying: a submissive waiting.

III. Humility; patience; last, hope. Hope is the expectation —more or less confident, for it admits of degrees—of a pleasant future. It cannot be that this scene of confusion should be for ever. Hope, which is faith's foresight, sees things which are not as though they were, and hears a voice say from the excellent glory, "Behold, I make all things new." "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Restful Thoughts for Restless Times*, p. 264.

REFERENCES: i. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1909; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 422. i. 13, 14.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 483. i. 14.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiii., p. 257; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 83.

Chap. i., vers. 14-16.

HOLINESS.

I. Holiness in the heart, or as it works its way down to the depth of our nature. (1) In their unregenerate state men always fashion themselves after the pattern of their lusts or inward sinful desires; (2) the power of evil, though not expelled, is dethroned in the believer's heart, and the principle of dutiful obedience takes its place.

II. Holiness in the life, or as it widens out over the whole area of conduct. This enjoins holiness—(1) in all our reading and thinking; (2) in all our conversation; (3) in all our acts.

III. Holiness in its standard: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 111.

REFERENCES: i. 14-16.—W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 404. i. 15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 207. i. 15, 16.—J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 67; W. Simpson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 390.

Chap. i., ver. 16.—"It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

God's Holiness and Man's.

I. The nature of God is the foundation of moral obligation. When we travel in thought to the cause and origin of all things, we perpetually fall back on God as the only solution of the mystery of the universe. In God's nature we find all moral principles, just as in His duration we find eternity, in His omnipotence all the forces of external nature, and in His thought absolute reality and truth. God's holiness is that which has made holiness desirable to every intelligence in the universe; His character is the rule of all mind.

II. The nature of man makes resemblance to God possible. It is a sublime truth that there is such resemblance between God and our poor hearts that even in our fallen condition there is enough of the Divine image left upon us for us to hear this heavenly voice and to know that it has a triumphant message even for us. We are not so smitten but that these words appeal to our conscience and are verified by our experience. It is possible for us to yield ourselves unto God, because He is God, and we are made in His likeness.

III. All the essential perfections of God, even those in which we cannot resemble Him, add force to this appeal. (1) He who is omnipotent is holy. He has resolved to bring His omnipotence to bear upon the extermination of sin, for He is holy, and it is He who says to us, "Be ye holy." (2) He who is omniscient is holy; He who knows all the recesses of your heart, all the excuses to which you resort, all the palliations that you can make for yourself, all your thoughts, passions, fears, and joys, is holy. (3) He who is merciful is holy; therefore "be ye holy." His mercy is a manifestation of holiness; it is not a random or an arbitrary affluence of pity for our misery, but it is the transfiguration of holy law into heavenly love, so that from nature and from Calvary, as well as from Sinai, is heard the voice which says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 165.

Chap. i., ver. 16.—"It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (R.V., "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy").

I. We must not think we have exhausted the subject of righteousness when we have merely taught men the more obvious of the elementary lessons: to maintain an external respectability of conduct and to have a general preference for truth and

justice. Christ came to supply a remedy that reaches deeper than this. The term "righteousness" implies that we must endeavour to maintain a more equitable balance than we often witness among the varied rights and interests which contribute to make up our social system. Our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees by founding itself, not on some rigorous definition of abstract right, but on equity inspired by love.

II. But if it were one object of our Saviour's coming to deepen and extend our moral regeneration, a still greater revolution is implied in our restoration to holiness, the character which is so emphatically claimed by God Himself, and which had been still more completely forfeited by sin. It is one of the foremost conditions of our sacramental union with Christ that His grace should cleanse our hearts from evil tendencies and should make and keep them pure and holy.

III. The third of the three great gifts which are to renew us in the image of Christ is that of knowledge, the marvellous extension of that spiritual knowledge which ranges from this world to the next. It is a revelation which appeals to the highest instincts of the spirit, lifting up the cloud which hung with equal mystery over the beginning and the end, showing us how man was created after the image of God and in what way he departed from his fellowship with God, opening out the prospect of that Divine contemplation which will form the highest reward and occupation of the saints hereafter in the eternity wherein the faithful shall be finally made perfect in Christ's image.

ARCHDEACON HANNAH, *Cambridge Review*, Feb. 17th, 1886.

REFERENCES: i. 16-20.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 69; vol. iv., pp. 372, 496.

Chap. i., ver. 17.—"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

WE collect from the language of the New Testament that fear formed a greater part of the state of mind in which the first disciples of Christ lived than it does now. Persons are described as being in a permanent and habitual state of mind which is called fear. It is not, of course, that state of disturbance and alarm which we are placed in by a sudden danger, not excitement and alarm. Still it is fear, and it has the natural and true characteristics of fear. It keeps people in earnest that they

should be in the right way, apprehensive lest they should fail. They are solicitous about their own salvation, do not regard it as a matter of course. They always have it in their minds that they are going they do not know where; and while, on the one hand, they have firm hopes resting on God's promises, they still do not think of an unknown world and another life without fear.

I. It must appear indeed, when we examine it, that this fear is part of the very life of Christians, and that we cannot have even our understanding quick and vigorous without it; it is part of our very understanding. Fear is the very mode through which we express the fact that we do believe; it is our perception of things being real. It is simple stupidity, it is being without ideas, to be without it. Persons may have quick parts, eyes and speech may be quick and ready, but their souls are dull, they are without the quickening faculty, if they are without fear.

II. In the Christians of the Bible we see, as I have said, habitual fear, and this fear, far from depressing them, is rather a stimulus to their faith; and by giving strength to their faith, it confirms a happy experience of the effects of the Gospel upon them. With fear operating in them, they felt that they could not doubt. The faith of the early Christians was largely indebted to their fear for its rootedness and firmness. Fear planted it in their souls, and established it as a natural product of the soil, whereas under mere joy and hope it would have flourished prosperously for a season as an exotic, but its strength would have been a delusive one. While you fear, you believe; this, at any rate, is one effect. Fear is thus sustaining. While you fear God, you believe that God is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. This is ever the accompaniment of fear in Scripture, and the great compensation; it settles, it tranquillises, it gives peace, and it breeds ultimately security and calm, and a reasonable assurance. All those quiet, settled views of the Divine government which fix and strengthen its hold upon the mind, and make it the great anchorage it is, from which to be unmoored is to lose everything, arise from fear, from seeing the awfulness of facts as they are and this whole world as it is around us.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 322.

CHRISTIAN Fear.

I. The first reason why we should cultivate this fear is that the God on whom we call is a Father.

II. The second, that He is a Judge.

III. The third, that He judges according to every man's work. (1) Here the work, not the person, is the subject of judgment; (2) work, not works. God will judge our life as a whole.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 131.

Chap. i., vers. 17-19.

FEAR of Judgment to Come and of Redemption Accomplished. Note—

I. The sphere and operation of Christian fear. There are some to whom the importance attached to fear in this place and elsewhere seems in contradiction to the teaching of the Apostle John, who speaks of fear as being cast out by perfect love. But it is to be observed that it is perfect love to which this prerogative is assigned. When love is perfect, it renders fear in any other sense than that of reverence unnecessary and impossible; but with imperfect love fear has room, and an important sphere of action. It affords help and stimulus to imperfect love, and pushes it on to perfection. You may say that fear depresses, and sometimes even benumbs and paralyses. This may be true of fear that exists alone in the soul, but it is not true of that which coexists with faith and love, and hope and joy. The sharp east wind of spring is not a favourite; nobody speaks well of it; everybody grumbles about it; but still it dries the wet earth, and it is the accompaniment of lengthening days and strengthening sunshine. So fear goes along with the stirring of life. Fear of loss and pain, and every form of evil, is such an essential part of human nature and so bound up with man's progress in every direction, so necessary even to his very existence, that man cannot extirpate fear except by casting out the last vestige of belief in danger and every faintest foreboding of conscience.

II. Fear in relation to the Father that judgeth. I believe in a Father that judges: that will certainly rouse me up; it will waken my slumbering energies; it will cause me to look well to the state of my heart and life; but the word "Father" will always keep the thought of judgment from overwhelming me. So long as the word "Father" is real to me, the thought of judgment will make life solemn and earnest, but never gloomy, never enduringly sad.

III. In order to have a true Christian fear we must place together judgment by works and redemption by the blood of Christ. Let not this fear in view of redemption be deemed

inconsistent with the joy and freedom which belong to the Gospel. It is precisely the man who has that realising sense of redemption which makes him afraid of not proving worthy of it who has also joy. These two, fear and joy, grow out of the same root of redemption. The more joy in Christ any man has, the more will he be afraid of not conforming sufficiently to Christ. Fear is inseparable from earnestness of purpose. It accompanies all the nobler feelings. If you love, you fear; if you strive and aspire, you fear. Whatever may be one's estimate of the fear of judgment, all must recognise the nobility of the fear that springs from thinking of the greatness of redemption. This fear is only possible to men who have spiritual sight, tender conscience, and gratitude. But who can fail to see how the thought of judgment to come enhances redemption? Is it not equally clear that the awe of redemption and the fear of not being worthy of it will always, in proportion as a man grows, come more and more to the front, and throw the other fear into the shade? Fear thus stands out as one of the main ways by which men pass from the life of self to the life of God, and the higher fear shines forth as the antidote to all that is selfish and narrow in the lower. J. LECKIE, *Sermons*, p. 194.

Chap. i., vers. 18-21.

THE Ransom. Note—

I. The foreordination of the sacrifice.

II. The preciousness of the sacrifice.

III. The efficiency of the sacrifice in accomplishing its two-fold object—(1) in satisfying Divine justice, for "God raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory"; (2) in effecting the emancipation of men from the dominion of sin and the corruption of their nature, redeeming them from their vain conversation, received by tradition from their fathers.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 149.

REFERENCES: i. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 621; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 107; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 203; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. x., p. 286; A. C. Rice, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 108; J. Stannard, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 232. i. 21.—L. D. Bevan, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 299.

Chap. i., ver. 22.—"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

CHRISTIAN Love.

I. Purity: "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." (1) The word for purified in this verse is not that denoting the

infusion of virtue, but that which signifies the expulsion from the soul of all defilement, and especially of selfishness. (2) The way to secure this is by believing obedience to the truth as revealed in the Gospel.

II. Unfeignedness: "unfeigned love of the brethren"—genuine love, without dissimulation, free from hypocrisy. (1) We read of faith unfeigned—that is, faith which is firm and solid to the core. (2) Love unfeigned is love which will not give way under trial, that will suffer a burden to be put on its back.

III. Fervour: "with a pure heart fervently." This implies that our love of the brethren should be powerful enough (1) to overcome all sinful obstacles in our nature, (2) to overcome all national and sectarian differences.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 170.

REFERENCES: i. 23.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 125; *Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 325.

Chap. i., vers. 23-25.

THE New Birth.

I. Man's inner and nobler life is not like his outer life, a life carried on in many of its most important functions unknown to himself. That lower life has its youth and its age, its vigour and its infirmity, its ruddy cheek and its grey hair, independently of him who lives it. These things follow a fixed law, and come upon us although we will not, and when we know not. But it is not so with the higher life of the Spirit. There is no unconsciousness here. No man lives unto God and knows it not. If you are made a son of God, by the power of the Spirit, through faith in Christ, you don't go about hoping and trusting you are God's, committing your eternal prospects to a miserable uncertainty; no, if you have this life, you know it, and you live it. The truth of love first softened, first warmed, first quickened, your hard, and cold, and dead hearts, first found its way, like a chance seed, under some broken bit of the surface, and obtained a lodgment there, so that the birds of the air snatched it not away, nor the foot of the passer-by trod it down. "The Father hath loved Me." Let this seed abide and work, and though little is done in comparison with what is to come, much is done in comparison with what is past.

II. We want some Divine, abiding influence which may show us the wonders of that love; and so it was that when the incarnate and triumphant Son of God was taken from us

He did not leave us orphans. He went up on high and received gifts for men, even God the Holy Spirit, who came down upon the assembled Church as the one fulfilled promise of the Father, the great result of redemption, the begetting, and enlivening, and enabling power of the new life in man. Without Him all were vain; without Pentecost Calvary were powerless.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 324.

REFERENCES: i. 23-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 398; vol. xvii., No. 999.

Chap. i., vers. 24, 25; ii., vers. 1, 2.

THE Frailty of Man.

"For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Disease is a democrat, like death. It makes no distinctions, and equalises all ranks in society, as the grave levels all mankind. For disease is no respecter of persons. It does not mind Cossacks on guard, or policemen on duty, or locks on doors; it has no awe of any king, or respect for purple and a crown, but invades a palace as well as a hovel. For we all go together in the main features of our wasting lives. We are all alike in weakness, in pain, in sorrow, and in death. Everything in the world is relative. Happiness is pretty evenly distributed. Fortune never comes with both hands full. In the main headings of our history you and I are alike; in sin and sorrow, in weakness and pain, by the open grave and with a broken heart, we are all alike—you and I, king and peasant.

I. Now hear the argument and application. Since, as Simon Peter says, "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," since the longest life is such a pitiful span, since our days are flying before the pursuit of death, since you and I shall soon be "a kneaded clod in cold abstraction lying," since our little path across this world shall soon be overgrown with weeds and obliterated, and you and I forgotten—well, since that is so, what follows? "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die"? No. St. Peter and you do not agree. But since all flesh is as grass, since we die to-morrow, and we want to dream sweet dreams in the sleep of death, therefore—"wherefore" let us lay aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings." Ah, that is better. We go with Peter. For since we are grass and live a brief day of years, what is the use of so much anxious care, of so much fretting and fussing? What is the good of hoarding money for other people to ruin themselves

with when you are dead? What is the good of hating your neighbour? What is the sense of trying to act a part, of seeming other than we are, of being hypocrites? What is the gain of guile, or envy, or evil-speaking? Let us think no evil, and do no wrong; for this is the word of the Lord that endureth for ever: that all bitterness and wrath, that all anger and clamour, that all evil-speaking, that all malice, be put away from you. And let us be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Then, since I am grass, and disease is in the air, and I die to-morrow, I will have no dealings with malice, or hate, or envies; I will chide nobody in the world except myself, against whom I know most faults. And that is the moral. If all flesh is grass, let us remember it: no grudge, no guile, no hate, no evil-speaking, but to love one another, for we are only the dream of a dream anyway; we are only here a night and gone to-morrow.

II. A man is only as big as his average deed—not an inch taller, not an ounce better—when it comes to assigning him his place among his fellows, or to rewarding him in presence of the judgment angels, before the throne of God; but a man is as big as his faith or his intention, thanks to Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, when it comes to saving the soul of a dying thief on the cross, or, for that matter, the soul of you and me. The reward for deeds done in the body is one thing; salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is another thing. There shall be millions of people saved so as by fire. They won't take anything with them, not a bond, not a brick in a mansion, nothing. Everything but their little soul shall be consumed, and it saved so as by fire, as Lot was out of Sodom. But there are some thousands of people who won't go in through the gate empty-handed. No; they shall not merely be saved, but they shall have something in their hands. Like Vespasian coming amid triumphal acclaims up the Appian Way to the centre of the "Eternal City," with trophies won by conquests in many wars in far-away lands, so some heroes of God shall go through the gates, as Paul did, with stars of rejoicing in their crown. These are they who did Christ's works as well as confessed His name.

J. R. PAXTON, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 495.

Chap. i., vers. 24, 25.

THE Great Contrast.

Like the sway and swell of Christmas bells across the snow,

like mournful music heard across the hurrying waves, like the haunting refrain of an enchanting song which refuses to be forgotten, come the words of this Apostle of human feeling chastened by penitence and sorrow, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth ; the flower thereof falleth."

I. St. Peter is writing to the scattered congregations of the Lesser Asia. He is writing to comfort, to stimulate, to encourage. These poor struggling bands of Christians, surrounded by vast and unsympathetic heathen populations, needed all the assistance which could be given them by apostolic strength, and insight, and enthusiasm. St. Peter has his feet on the track of the greatest of the prophets ; and just as the children of captive Israel must have found it hard to think of the vast Babylonian power which held them as anything but invincible, just as the spectacle of the immense material splendours of that ancient empire of palaces and temples must have overwhelmed their imagination, and therefore it was necessary for the prophet, gazing forward through these years of trial and sorrow, to leave them a certain assurance that all this earthly splendour was as passing as the withering grass or the fading flower, so it was now.

II. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass." Here, then, under the pathetic image of the withering grass and the fading flower, the Apostle illustrates the passing character of that group of phenomena which he characterises as man and his glory. The glory of man ! Yes, man, in many departments of his wide-reaching activity, has the glory which thrills and excites him in this mortal life. (1) There is, for instance, his glory in relation to nature. How marvellous have been at once the discoveries and the consequent achievements in the fields of science. (2) Think, again, of the development of those arts and inventions, side by side with a more enlightened social sentiment, which have made this scene of sense and time more suitable, less painful, to man as a passing home ! We are not foolish if these are viewed as among God's gifts. (3) Or think of the beauties of art, the sweet songs of sweet singers, the entrancing tones of music, the triumphs of architecture, or the development of principles of loyalty to love and duty which have created or guided the immeasurable blessings of a civilised society and a Christian home. The mind has only to rest for a moment on any of these very real blessings to feel how real, how attractive, is "the

glory of man"! But we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, with all our many blessings, with all our intoxicating discoveries, the main conditions of the journey of life have not changed. There is still the mystery of bodily pain; there is still the darker mystery of moral evil; there are still disappointed hopes and broken hearts; and, still before us all—

"Black-stoled, black-hooded like a dream,"

there is the inexorable form of death. If we are to make anything our own in so real a sense that it may be ours for ever, it must be something more than that which death can touch; it must be something more than the "glory of man."

III. The "glory of man" is "as the flower of the grass.' Yes, but "the word of the Lord abideth for ever." The word of the Lord! What do we mean by the word of the Lord? When we speak of the word of a man, we mean his very thought, clothed in appropriate garb and equipped with suitable equipments to enable it to pass from mind to mind. When we speak of the word of the Lord, we mean the very thought of the living God, sent forth to reach the mind, and to dwell in the heart, and to become part of the life of His creature; and as it comes from the Infinite, the Eternal, it partakes of His truth, His eternity, His infinity. By it man knows God, and "this is life eternal," this is a permanent possession, this is a lasting heritage: "to know Thee, the true God." (1) The moral law abideth for ever. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, by an absolute decree. Though all appearances are against it, "though hand join in hand"—appearances are one thing, and reality quite another—right in the long run must prevail, and "wickedness shall not go unpunished." (2) The catholic faith abideth for ever. Call it the Divine revelation, call it the Gospel of Christ, call it the catholic faith, call it what you will; do not quarrel about names, but remember that that body of unchanging truth with regard to God's nature, and man's dealing, and man's relation to God does not change. Of all duties there is none more paramount than in heart and life to "hold the faith." (3) The Bible in its sacred and unapproached pre-eminence abideth for ever. It lives on because it has in it the life and thought of the unchanging God, felt in serious moments to be of the last importance for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for consolation to the soul in the journey of life.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *The Journey of Life*, p. 125.

THE Perpetuity of the Gospel as compared with other Religions and Philosophies.

I. Christianity must satisfy the intellectual requirements of every age. It must (1) be in accord with the demonstrations of science, (2) offer new problems of its own, (3) stimulate the understanding to greater activity.

II. It must meet the moral requirements of every age. (1) This implies that it must accord with the distinct dictates of our moral nature. (2) It must be in advance of the moral performances of every age. (3) It must enter into the world as a refining element.

III. If the Gospel is to continue to the end of time, it must continue to meet the spiritual wants of man. If it does not do this, it is inevitably doomed to extinction.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 185.

HUMAN Changes and the Divine Unchangeableness.

I. The first consolation our text has for depression is that it contrasts with our frailty the word of the Eternal God. It matters little that the worker passes if his work endures. The truth we speak lives after us. God has His purpose, and He reveals it. He uses us as we wish to use ourselves: to do a thing which shall survive us. He calls us to take up our calling in a labour that others were at before us, and that shall be consummated when we are gone. We plant for our heirs; we build for the future: we heap up riches, and know not who shall gather them. If we had but as firm a faith in "the word of God" as we have in the results of human investigation, if we were as earnest in the Divine work as in our own, despondency would be at an end.

II. The next thought suggested by our text is that man's changefulness illustrates the eternal purpose of God. The Divine intention is brought out in His dealing with the fleeting generations of men; it becomes venerable in retrospect, while it is ever revealing itself in the freshness of a progressive history. A succession of changes implies the unchangeable; there would be no movement if there were not that which endures. An unvarying history would be a history of death; we gain a vaster idea of permanence by advance than we could ever gain by the continuance of unchanging forms. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever," depository of God's creative

energy. We want a varying, enlarging human history to gain a complete and worthy view of the faithfulness of God.

III. The perpetuity of the Gospel is the third subject of our thoughts. We need a revelation; an unrevealed were an unknown God. And yet how can we dream of abiding truth in a changing humanity? As mankind advances, will not men's thoughts vary concerning even such fundamental things as moral obligation, the character of virtue, the objects of our devotion, the very being of God? The answer is, all the progress of human thought and feeling, all developments of the religious consciousness which are to be enduring, will take place along the line of the Gospel revelation. There will be development in the Christian faith: a fuller apprehension of its truths; a deeper sympathy with its spirit; a larger experience of its power; a broader application of it to the varying wants of men.

IV. The enduring word of God is the pledge of our endurance. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

A. MACKENNAL, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 51.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-3.

THE Milk of the Word.

This subject divides itself into three parts:—

I. Healthy appetite, or, in other words, an earnest desire for spiritual nourishment: "As new-born babes, desire" earnestly, covet eagerly, "the sincere milk of the word."

II. Healthy food, or, in other words, God's truth as contained in Holy Writ: "Desire the sincere milk of the word." The milk of the word, or, according to a better translation, rational milk, the sincere milk, *i.e.*, milk free from all deleterious admixtures.

III. Healthy growth: "that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." Growth unto salvation implies (1) growth in knowledge, (2) growth in holiness.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 214.

REFERENCES: ii. 1-3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 459. ii. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 139.

Chap. ii., vers. 2, 3.

THE Baptismal Vow.

I. In our hearts and lives, the evil which we cast away is for

ever returning; the truths which we have learned we are for ever forgetting; the good which we should do we are continually leaving undone. Wherefore our baptismal promise requires to be renewed, not once only at our confirmation, but continually all our lives. We never can hear another renewing it with his lips without having great cause to renew it ourselves also, for his need of renewing it is not greater than ours. And as the three parts of our vow, although distinct, are yet all renewed together at our confirmation, so do they need to be also by us all. Repentance, faith, and holiness are joined inseparably in all our earthly life; it is only by keeping them so joined that we shall come to that blessed division of them when, there being no more sin, there will be no more repentance, when sight will leave no place for faith, and holiness shall then be all in all for ever.

II. Every day we need repentance. Our baptismal vow promised to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that we would not follow or be led by them. It is either by the temptations of the flesh, or by those of the world, or by both, that by far the greatest number of souls, and in by far the greatest portion of their lives, are tempted and are overcome. The evil, then, not renounced, but allowed to overcome us, is a thing which requires of us indeed a deeper thought and a deeper sorrow than to many of us may seem even possible. We shall not care to believe God's truths, nor shall we care to follow His holiness, unless we do earnestly desire to renounce our evil, unless we watch for it everywhere, and fear God's judgment upon it, and believe that it is as great and as abiding as His word and as the death of His Son declares it to be.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 122.

Chap. ii., vers. 3-5.

THE Spiritual Temple of Priestly Worshippers.

I. We have in the text a spiritual house: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Christ is the foundation; and as stone after stone is placed on Him, He, being a living stone, infuses His life right through the entire mass. Evidently no one can be a member of the Church unless he has come to Christ, for the Apostle distinctly says that the spiritual house consists of those who have come to the living Rock, Christ Jesus. (1) Now where are the stones formed? They are cut

out of the quarry of nature; stone by stone is brought out of that deep cavern, placed upon the living Stone, and each united to the others. The Spirit of God goes into the deep, black quarry of human nature, and there hews out the hidden stones, and by His own almighty power bears them to the foundation-stone and places them in a living temple, to go no more out for ever. (2) The stones must be brought to each other. There must be union existing between all the stones of the spiritual temple, ay, and not only union, but also mutual support. While all rest on the foundation, each stone touches, and serves to strengthen and support, the others. (3) The Church is spiritual also in its glories. There was an external magnificence about the temple of Solomon, although the external glory even of that material temple was nothing compared with the internal beauty. But what is the beauty of the Lord's temple now? Is there anything external about it? You will find, generally speaking, that the majority of Christians consist of the poor.

II. Within this spiritual house we have priestly worshippers —"a holy priesthood." The death of Christ abolished all earthly priesthood by making every believer a priest. In the old dispensation the priesthood was limited to one tribe; I should be correct if I said it was found in one family: but when Christ died, invisible hands took hold of the veil of the Temple and rent it in twain from the top to the bottom, and now, by virtue of union with Christ, every believer is a priest. It is this doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers that is the very core and centre of New Testament teaching. All believers in the world are kings and priests unto God; and though apparently without robes, yet are they all decked in the glorious garment of the Lord our Righteousness.

III. Spiritual sacrifices. There can be no priesthood without sacrifices. The two things were correlative, and the chief employment of the priest was to offer up sacrifices. Now, although the work of sacrifice is changed in its nature, it is not done away with. In a spiritual house, and by a spiritual priesthood, there must, for the sake of conformity, be a spiritual sacrifice. What is the sacrifice that the holy priesthood offers? Surely (1) communion in prayer, (2) also communion in praise; and (3) we offer ourselves in sacrifice.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1093.

REFERENCES: ii. 3. — Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 142. ii. 4.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1334.

Chap. ii., vers. 4, 5.

THE Living Stone.

I. Note the Church, or spiritual temple, in its foundation: Christ.

II. The Church, or spiritual temple, in its superstructure.

III. The Church, or spiritual temple, in its service: "a holy priesthood."

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 233.

THE Spiritual Church.

Believers in Jesus are here presented in two aspects: they are called a "spiritual house" and "a holy priesthood," two phrases which, if you translate the word here rendered "house" into the more sacred word "temple," will be found to have a very religious significance and a very close connection with each other. "Coming to Christ as a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious," believers rise into a spiritual house from Christ, the great High-priest, consecrated after no carnal commandment; believers rise into a holy priesthood by a majestic investiture that is higher than the ordination of Aaron. There are two points especially presented to us here: spirituality and holiness. Let us take those and dwell upon them for a moment.

I. Any thoughtful observer of the successive ages of the world's history will discover that each generation has in some remarkable particulars progressed upon its predecessor. This progress is inseparable from the creation of God; is present everywhere, from the formation of a crystal to the establishment of an economy; is seen in the successive dispensations in which God has manifested His will to man. You can trace through all these dispensations the essential unity of revealed religion. Believers are the stones in the spiritual temple, broken, it may be, into conformity or chiselled into beauty by successive strokes of trial; and wherever you find them, in the hut or the ancestral hall, in the climate of the snow or the climate of the sun, whether society hoot them or whether society honour them, whether they robe themselves in delicate apparel or rugged home-spun, they are parts of the grand temple which God esteems higher than cloister, crypt, or stately fane, and of which the top stone is to be brought on with shouting of "Grace, grace, unto it!" That is the first thought: a "spiritual house," and also of these lively stones is built up a "spiritual house."

II. Then take the second thought: holiness: "a holy priesthood." In the Jewish dispensation these words often meant nothing more than an outward separation of the services of God. Thus the priests of the Temple and the vestments of their ministry were said to be ceremonially holy; but there is more in that word, surely, than this ritual of external sanctity. There is the possession of that mind which was in Christ Jesus the Lord; there is the reinstatement in us of that image of God which was lost by the foulness of the Fall. Many are the passages of Scripture in which holiness is considered as the supreme devotion of the heart to the service of God, and is represented as the requirement and the characteristic of Christianity. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" "Be ye holy, as I am holy"; "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"; "For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness"; "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

W. M. PUNSHON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 161.

REFERENCES: ii. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii, No. 1376. ii. 4-6.—W. Spensley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 268.

Chap. ii., ver. 5.—"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

TRIFLES to do, not Trifles to leave undone.

I. It was a great saying of the Psalmist when he said, "I am small and of no reputation, yet do I put my trust in Thee." A very great saying; for, indeed, nothing makes man yield to temptation so easily as the thought of being insignificant, and that what he does matters little. If you are so small that nothing you do makes much difference, and of no reputation, so that your actions will not be known, why not do as you please? insinuates the devil. Take your own way; no one will be the worse for so unknown and obscure a person. Satisfy your own will; God does not care, or man either, for you and yours. And so the deed is done which makes the leak; the little hole, as it were, is bored which lets the water through the dyke; the loosening has begun, and, small though it be, all will break up. It is the bad work of the small, the idle sins of the many of no reputation, that ruin the world. For, indeed, every life as a life is equally valuable. The progress of the world is marked by

the level the many get to, or, in other words, by the goodness of the small and those of no reputation who nevertheless, like the Psalmist, put their trust in God. This main truth is stamped in characters so broad and large everywhere that, like the daily miracle of nature, no one heeds it.

II. Never neglect in yourself or another what comes every day. Many a great love has been overthrown by a little disagreeable habit always recurring. The dropping of water has passed into a proverb for the transcendent power of this seeming weakness. And how do little, vexatious, and mean offenders, like the flies in summer, sting all the more because they are mean. That is great to us which touches us greatly, and small things touch us most; and our being small does not prevent us from being powers.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 177.

SOCIETY.

I. The measure of a man's excellence is his power of uniting with others for good; the measure of a nation's excellence is the obedience and co-operative power that are in it, freedom from abusive language; freedom from violent acts; the sense to see great men; the sense to see great laws; the sense to appreciate good work and despise talk and self-glorification. The end of the world's existence is that this iron fact of society's linked chain shall become a glorious perfection of many in one and one in many, an image of the perfect unity of God.

II. We all know that man does not live alone. How few consider the deep, the terrible meaning of this great fact. Take, for instance, Abraham and his race. How for thousands of years the Jew has been a marked man in feature, a marked man pre-eminent in patience, perseverance, intellect, in a word, in intense vitality, shown all the more as being the vitality of a fallen race, whilst all other fallen races have practically disappeared. What a grand inheritance Abraham, the faithful, the true, the temperate, the hardy man of God, passed on to his children taken as one body! Society means that good and evil are ever intermingling with unfailing energy, and that, as one or other prevails, the society lives or dies. This is as true on a large scale as on a small, true in a nation, true in a man.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 171.

REFERENCES: ii. 5. — E. Thring, *Church of England Pulpit*,

vol. xiv., pp. 90, 103; J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 409; W. Skinner, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 225; A. Mursell, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 89; J. Keble, *Sermons from Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 316; *Ibid.*, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 415; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 234; *Homilist*, 4th series, vol. i., pp. 296, 297.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."

THE Divine Foundation.

I. Jesus Christ as the foundation-stone. This means that Jesus is (1) the cardinal truth of the Christian system; (2) the central truth of Christianity; (3) the all-comprehensive truth of Christianity.

II. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, or the harmonising truth, of Christianity. He is the corner-stone (1) of the religions of the world; (2) of Christian doctrines; (3) of Christian Churches.

III. He is the sure foundation. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be confounded."

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 251.

I. JESUS CHRIST is the corner-stone, uniting Jews and Gentiles. (1) Jews and Gentiles met in His person. (2) They had a place in His ministry. (3) They are united in the Church He established.

II. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, uniting men and angels.

III. He unites God and man (1) in His person; (2) in His ministry; (3) in His Church.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 271.

REFERENCE: ii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1429.

Chap. ii., vers. 6, 7.

CHRIST the One Foundation.

Let us consider a few of the senses in which Christ makes good this title of corner-stone.

I. How, do we think, did the first preachers to the heathen win converts? By appealing to men's deepest sense of need, to the felt necessity of a centralising, consolidating principle of human life. Two things, at least, we must secure if life is not to be a failure. (1) One is something certainly true, a truth to stand by amid uncertainties. As we advance in our earthly journey, perplexities gather round on all sides; life has not

verified our first expectations; it raises questions which it does not answer; there is a confusion and discord of theories, but where is that which we can depend upon and grasp firmly, looking life and death in the face? The answer is in the words of Jesus, "I am the Truth." (2) Again, man needs a power of moral and spiritual rectification. He wants to be cleansed from his own unholiness, relieved of his own sense of guilt, otherwise he cannot build in peace; how should he? Life, to be worth having, must be a life with a quiet conscience. To believers in Christ He is all-precious, because He can and does help them to become pure and single-hearted, high in aim and active in duty.

II. In His relation to the several doctrines and institutions of His kingdom, Christ sustains the character of the one foundation. (1) It is so in regard to doctrines; He is the one object whom they set before us. (2) He is also the foundation of all His ordinances. (3) If Christ be in these ways the foundation of our spiritual life in all its aspects, should He not be also the foundation of all that we do? Let us "consider our ways," and resume the building of the spiritual house within us, being assured that the promise will be abundantly verified to us, "Be strong, and work, for I am with you."

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 291.

Chap. ii., ver. 7.—"Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."

THE Preciousness of Christ.

The writer, in some four or five verses of the chapter, has been employing the image of a building, or rather of a temple, to describe the relation existing between Christ and His Church. According to this image, the Lord Jesus Christ is the solid foundation-stone, which bears the weight of the entire superstructure, and upon which the firmness and solidity of the edifice depend. This stone has been selected by God and placed by Him in its appointed situation; this stone, moreover, is a living stone: it has the property of communicating life to that which is brought into contact with it, and to it are drawn in rapid succession the other living stones, the members of the mystical body of Christ, who are to be built together into a spiritual house. The main thought of the passage—that Christ, the personal Christ, is the foundation-stone of the sacred structure, and that as such He is precious to a certain class of persons, though undervalued and contemned by others—is simple and obvious enough.

I. Christ is valuable, or precious, when considered in Himself. The rarity of an article or of a substance is one of the constituting causes of its value. The one last copy of a remarkable edition of a remarkable book; the one picture of a famous artist, who deviated for once from his ordinary style, and left behind him a singular production of his genius; the one gem, which surpasses all other gems in size and brilliance, or even, it may be, in the peculiarity of its defects—these things, and such as these, are frequently the subjects of an earnest and eager competition, and happy is the man considered to be who can succeed in making himself the possessor of a coveted prize. Rarity, then, makes a thing valuable. And if so, how valuable must He be whom the Scripture calls wonderful, He who is the only-begotten of the Father, the incarnate Son of God. (2) Our foundation-stone is precious also on account of its own intrinsic worth and excellence and its perfect adaptation to the purpose which it is intended to subserve. (3) Christ's preciousness is enhanced by that training and discipline, that process of intellectual and spiritual preparation, which it was the Father's good will that He should be called upon to undergo.

II. Christ is valuable, not only in Himself, but also in the estimation of His people. They think much of Him. There is nothing His people would not consent to part with, if the parting were necessary, in order to retain their possession of Christ. And Christ is more precious to His people the longer and the better they know Him. I have heard it said that the feeling of many persons, when they first see the far-famed cathedral of St. Peter at Rome, is one of disappointment. The building seems neither so large, nor so grand, nor so imposing, nor so beautiful as they had expected it to be. But when they become better acquainted with it the feeling of disappointment passes away; the beauty, the glory, grow upon the visitor. So what we knew and appreciated of Christ when we first put ourselves into His hands is as nothing when compared with what we know and appreciate of Him upon further acquaintance.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 1005.

Chap. ii., vers. 7, 8.

BELIEVERS and Unbelievers.

I. The relation which Jesus Christ sustains to believers: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." (1) The

first element in our idea of preciousness is rarity. (2) Another important element in our idea of preciousness is usefulness. (3) There must also be real intrinsic worth. All these we have in Christ Jesus.

II. The relation which Christ sustains to unbelievers. (1) He is by them rejected. (2) He becomes to them a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. (3) Those who through unbelief crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God do themselves incalculable moral hurt.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 288.

REFERENCES: ii. 7, 8. — Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 242; vol. xvi., No. 931; vol. xxi., No. 1224; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 61; H. Allon, *The Vision of God*, p. 75; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 124.

Chap. ii., ver. 9.—"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

PREDESTINATION.

I. It is impossible to read the Scriptures and not to see that there are some persons predestinated to glory. There are persons who, in the words of St. Paul, are vessels which God hath aforetime prepared unto glory. It is a fact—we see it with our eyes—that God makes a distinction between the heathen who have never heard the name of Christ and the Christian. The latter has high privileges which the former has not. The Christian has God's word to guide him, but not only this: he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him; he can reach to higher degrees of excellence here; and reason would surmise that he is intended for higher enjoyments hereafter. What reason surmises, revelation asserts. This, then, is the first, the foundation blessing of Christianity, in which we may humbly rejoice, and according to which all spiritual blessings are to be dispensed; it is the first link in the golden chain of glory which is to raise man from earth to heaven, the first round of that ladder up which man is to ascend to God, as angels descend to man.

II. But we may proceed yet farther. Our blessed Saviour tells us that there are many mansions in His Father's house, comparing the house that is to be to that which existed on earth while He yet tabernacled with men. In the temple of the first Jerusalem there was a variety of chambers or mansions,

employed for different purposes, though all relating directly or indirectly to the services of the sanctuary. In the new Jerusalem, which will itself be the temple of the universe, there will in like manner be many mansions or chambers. It is very possible that we are not only each of us predestined to heaven, but predestined also each to our particular place in heaven, that our very mansion is fixed. Let the glory which is awaiting us, and to which we are predestined, elevate our characters, ennoble our thoughts, extend our views. Co-heirs we are with Christ Himself, who is our Head; vessels we are designed for high honour; we are of the household of the King of kings; we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into His marvellous light. W. F. HOOK, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, p. 48.

REFERENCES: ii. 9.—R. Flint, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 216; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 284.

Chap. ii., vers. 9, 10.

THE True Israel.

I. "Ye are a chosen generation," the word "generation" here meaning, not contemporaries, but the offspring of one common parent, the offshoots of one original stock. The Israelites were a special "generation." (1) They had sprung from Abraham as their common progenitor. (2) The Jews were, moreover, a "chosen generation"—called out of the darkness of Chaldæan idolatry to the marvellous light of Divine revelation.

II. "Ye are a royal priesthood." (1) The Jews were a nation of priests. (2) "A royal priesthood." "Ye are kings and priests," kings over yourselves and priests unto God. A grand spectacle to see men monarchs of themselves, ruling their own passions and keeping their lusts in subjection. (3) "Ye are a royal priesthood, to show forth the excellences of Him who hath called you." By your holy conversation, upright demeanour, you are to show forth the character of your God.

III. "Ye are a holy nation." As a people bound together for the purposes of holiness, we should show forth the excellences of God.

J. C. JONES, *Studies in First Peter*, p. 307.

REFERENCES: ii. 12.—Archbishop Thomson, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 273. ii. 12, 13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 98. ii. 15.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 358; J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension*, p. 303.

Chap. ii., ver. 16.—"As the servants of God."

I. THE designation "servant of God" embodies an opinion or theory about human life. When a being like man finds himself in this present sphere of existence, with the endowments of thought and of passion which go to make up his nature, he naturally asks himself how he may make the best of his opportunity. For some men life is pleasure; for others it is energy; for others it is active thought; for the last class it is moral excellence. In all these cases, man lives within the compass of his own being, for something which it yields, or which, as he think, satisfies and completes it. His pleasure, his energy and thought, nay, his very virtue, are parts of himself. They exist as sensations, moods, facts, satisfactions of his being; they have no existence apart from him. The servant of God, too, may—nay, will sooner or later—taste exquisite pleasures, may exercise his thought on the highest subjects, may achieve real excellence in character and conduct; nay, in different degrees he cannot help doing this: but for him these things are not ends of action; they are only the accompaniments of his real object. He thinks of life only as service; he conceives of it as the surrender of his will, of his time, of his affections, of his intellect and memory, of his goods, if needs be, of his friendship, reputation, and health, and life, to a perfectly holy Being, who exists in utter independence of himself, who has the very highest claim upon his obedience. For him life is a constant sense of having upon him a Master's eye; it is a constant reference to what is known or may be inferred about a Master's will.

II. The right and property which God has over all men, as based on creation, is in the case of Christians reinforced by a second right based upon redemption. When all had been lost by abuse of that free will which is man's highest endowment, the infinite mercy stooped from heaven in the person of the Eternal Son to rescue us from misery and from shame, to endow us with the means of grace and with the hope of glory. If it is maintained that the service of God is unworthy of man's dignity, the answer is, first, that God made man, and, secondly, that He has made man to know and to serve Himself. Our human nature, notwithstanding its ancient error, does when cross-questioned point upwards; and experience confirms what reason and observation suggest. Those who have served God, though amidst imperfections and failures, yet do know that this service expands, satisfies, completes, all that is best and

strongest in their thoughts and affections; above all, that it corresponds with the facts of their being, that it is based on truth.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 821.

Chap. ii., ver. 16.—"As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

THE text sets before us the limits of Christian liberty, the responsibility which lies upon every Christian for the right government of his private individual will, according to what he knows, or ought to know, or might have known, of the will of God.

I. The love of liberty is generally said to be a feeling implanted in the heart of man. It begins to show itself in his earliest years. Even in our childhood we are all apt to show impatience at the control exercised over us by our parents and guardians, and in our strong manhood we chafe under the restraints of law and the commands of our superiors whenever they happen for the moment to cross or impede anything we desire to do. The sense of freedom is itself pleasure.

II. And yet, notwithstanding this hearty love of freedom, which appears so natural to us, the very earliest lesson we have to learn is that we are not free to act as we please even in earthly matters; that our will is not our own, but that of our parents and governors. Even when we are grown up and think we are about to taste the desired fruits of the liberty of manhood, the disagreeable conviction is forced upon us that if we would live happily and creditably here, we must prevent our desires and wills from ranging too widely. It is our highest interest, as it is our bounden duty, to consider in all our actions how far they will be for the general good as well as for our own good.

III. This, then, is the measure of the Christian's liberty in the world. We are free agents within the limits of God's laws, and of human laws also, as deriving their force and value from God's permission. The true Christian is the only man who is free upon earth, because he will never desire to do more than God's law permits him, and that, indeed, in glorious liberty. There is no such freedom as serving God.

P. WILLIAMS, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, April 24th, 1884.

FREEDOM and Law.

I. Christ has given to us men, first of all, political or social freedom. He has not, indeed, drawn out a scheme of govern-

ment and stamped it with His Divine authority as guaranteeing freedom. The New Testament only notices two elements in man's life as a political or social being. One is the existence of some government which it is a duty to obey, be it assembly, president, king, or emperor; the other element is the freedom of the individual Christian under any form of government whatever. The whole social fabric totters to its base when there is a conflict between human law and Divine law enthroned in conscience, when law and the highest liberty are foes. To avoid such a misfortune must be the aim of all wise legislators, to deprecate it the heartfelt prayer of all good citizens.

II. Christ gave men also intellectual freedom. He enfranchised them by the gift of truth. He gave truth in its fulness, truth absolute and final. Until He came the human intellect was enslaved. The religion of Christ gave an immense impulse to human thought. He led men out into the great highways of thought, where, if they would, they might know the universal Father, manifested in His blessed Son, as the Author of all existence, as its object and as its end.

III. Christ has made us morally free. He has broken the chains which fettered the human will, and has restored to it its buoyancy and power. Man was morally free in paradise; he became enslaved in consequence of that act of disobedience which we name the Fall. How was he to be enfranchised? What had been lost was more than regained in Christ. A Christian lives under a system of restrictions and obligations; and yet he is free. Those obligations and restrictions only prescribe for him what his own new, heaven-sent nature would wish to do and to be. They are acceptable to, they are demanded by, the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

H. P. LIDDON, *Easter Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 211.

REFERENCES: ii. 16.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 227; E. Bickersteth, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 221; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 295.

Chap. ii., vers. 16, 17.

CHRISTIAN Freedom.

I. We are here warned against two great enemies of our souls, which are ever seeking to bring us into bondage, and to substitute for the true Christian liberty the fancied freedom, but real slavery, of self-indulgence. These two enemies are (1) the lust of the flesh, and (2) pride. Our own consciences will tell

us that they are not enemies whose hostility is limited to persons placed in particular circumstances or to one particular period of Christian history, but that they make war upon all classes at all times. One proof of their universal enmity to Christ's servants is that they are two of the temptations through which the devil assailed Christ. It well becomes us, then, to take heed against snares so subtle that they were chosen by the great enemy for his own evil purposes; and, at the same time, if we tremble at our own experience and recollection of their power, we shall be comforted by the thought of One who, in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, being tempted by those very inclinations, is able to succour them that are tempted.

II. Selfishness and pride are here set before us as the two great enemies which war against the soul, and are ever seeking to bring it into bondage. And how are we to be delivered from their fetters, or from their assaults? The true reason why we remain slaves to these passions, in some one or more of their various manifestations, is that we are still strangers to the love of God. It is only in Christ that we can find safety or deliverance. Seek for true freedom in forgetting yourselves and remembering Him; think of the witness borne by His life and death against all self-seeking and self-exaltation; and learning to see all things and all persons no longer through the mists of pride and selfishness, but in the pure, heavenly radiance of His Gospel, let each offer up to Him the thoughtful prayer,—

> "Give unto me, made lowly wise,
> The spirit of self-sacrifice;
> The confidence of reason give;
> And in the light of truth Thy bondman let me live."

G. E. L. COTTON, *Expository Sermons on the Epistles*, vol. ii., p. 1.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood."

THE Obligation of Christians to the World and the Church.

I. "Honour all men." Christians in deed and truth, called by the grace of God to be a peculiar people, separate from the world, have this rule laid upon them. Why? Because in all men, even in those who refuse the Gospel, in the worshippers of the world, in those who are strangers to the family of Christ, there is something worthy of honour. The most depraved of the human race has an infinite price set upon his life; the blood of the meanest does not fall

to the ground unavenged. There is a Divine light, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; and for the sake of that, honour is due unto him, though by choosing darkness rather than light he has dishonoured himself. You owe to all men courtesy, generosity, charity, respect, and (what is perhaps harder than all) justice.

II. Having fulfilled this law, draw the line broadly and distinctly between it and the second rule: "Love the brotherhood." Remember where you are, if you be lively members of the body of Christ. You have been chosen out of the world, gathered into a fold of which Christ is the door, adopted into a home for the members of which He prayed to the Eternal Father "that they may be one, as We are." If you be true to your character, you will find in the peace of love and unity of your Christian home not only a solace for the troubles of the world, but a counterattraction against its sinful pleasures and shelter against its dangers. And, moreover, that love and union, which ministers to your joy, serves to the glory of God, and wins souls from the world into the Church.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 143.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 405; vol. xiii., p. 274; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 4th series, p. 51; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 25; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 17; R. Duckworth, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 211; J. G. Rogers, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 117.

Chap. ii., ver. 19.—"This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

PATIENCE under Undeserved Wrong.

I. St. Peter teaches that suffering is thankworthy, a gift from God, and acceptable in turn to Him, if it be accompanied by two conditions. (1) It must be undeserved. A slave, too, might be punished for doing what would merit punishment in a free man; a slave, too, might be violent, or abusive, or careless about that which belonged to others, or intemperate, or dishonest, or treacherous. If punished for offences of this kind, he might not complain. "What glory is it," asks St. Peter, "if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" The law, the eternal law, that punishment follows wrong-doing, is not suspended in the case of the slave. (2) And such suffering must be for conscience toward God. It must be borne for God's cause and sake, and with a good hope of God's approval. This it is which makes pain at once

bearable and bracing, when the conscience of the sufferer can ask the perfect moral Being to take note of it, just as David does in so many of his psalms. "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me. Lord, be Thou my Helper." Mere suffering which a man dares not offer to God, though it be borne patiently through physical courage, through "pluck," as we term it, has no spiritual value. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This is the Consecration Prayer, uttered on the cross, uttered, if in other language, wherever men suffer for conscience toward God; and by it suffering is changed—changed assuredly into moral victory.

II. And here it may be asked, "Why did not the Apostles denounce slavery as an intolerable wrong? Why did they trifle with it, and allow the Church which succeeded them to trifle with it? Why did they seem, indirectly at least, to sanction it by advising slaves to honour and obey their owners? Was not this of the nature of a compromise between good and evil—between the high principles of Christian morality on the one hand and the debased institutions of heathen life on the other? Would it not have been better to break with slavery at once and altogether,—better for the honour of the Christian revelation, better for the best interest of man?" Certainly, nothing can well be more antipathetic than the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of slavery; for slavery postulates an essential distinction between man and man, which is unknown to the Gospel. The Gospel proclaims the unity of the human race and the equality of all its members before God. The Gospel is based upon, and it consecrates, the laws of God in nature; and slavery, on the other hand, is distinctly unnatural: it is a rejection of the fundamental equality of man. It often, and very consistently, professes to reject belief in the unity of the human race. To slavery the deepest of all distinctions between human beings is the distinction between the man who is his own owner and the man who is owned by another. "In Christ Jesus," exclaims the Apostle, "there is neither bond nor free." But the exact question which the Apostles had to consider was not whether slavery was a bad social institution or theoretically indefensible, but this: whether slavery necessarily ruined the prospects of the human soul. A slave might be a Christian—he might be the best of Christians—easily enough. If he were harshly treated, that was not peculiar to his condition of life; it might even promote his sanctification. If he were tempted to do wrong, St. James would tell him that he should

count this all joy, knowing that the trial of his faith worked endurance. If he had to choose between sinful compliance with a master's will and punishment, though that punishment were death, he, with his eyes fixed on the Divine Sufferer, would know his part. The grace of God may make the soul of man independent of outward circumstances; and there is no real slavery when the soul is free. At the same time, although the Apostles were working, as I have said, for another world, in the course of doing so, and, as it were, incidentally, they were destined to be, from the nature of the case, great social reformers in this. They could not but detest slavery, but how was it to be done away with? Was it to be by some sudden revolutionary effort, supposing the thing to be possible? Was it to be by the influence of new principles—first upon the opinions of men, and then upon the structure of society? The Apostles chose the latter method, but it was a method which took time. The Apostles trusted to the infiltration of new principles into the thoughts and actions of men, and not to those violent and tragical catastrophes which, even when they succeed, succeed amid ruins. It was not the duty of the Gospel to proclaim a social war. There were sects at that time nearly related to Judaism. The Essenes and Therapeutæ they were called, and their teaching was certainly very familiar to St. Paul—sects which held that the slave should at once refuse all obedience to his master, in the name of human rights. But slaves, maddened by oppression into rebellion against order, would not, in that age at least, have put an end to slavery. It was better to teach a higher ideal of life, both to the slave and to the master, and meanwhile to proclaim the truth, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." In Christian households, a hundred courtesies softened the hardship of the legal relation between master and slave. The sense of a common brotherhood in Christ had already sapped the idea of any radical inequality between them.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 943.

Chap. ii., vers. 20, 21.—"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us."

WRITING probably from Rome, certainly in one of the closing years of his life, St. Peter saw the great tendency of social and political circumstances around him towards that outbreak of

violence against the worshippers of Christ which is known in history as the first persecution, in which he and St. Paul laid down their lives. He is anxious to prepare the Asiatic Christians for the trials which are before them. Then, as now, there were bad Christians who fell under the just sentence of the criminal law, and St. Peter reminds them that there is no moral glory in suffering that which we have deserved, even though we take our punishment uncomplainingly. "What glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" But he knew also that cruel and aggravated sufferings awaited numbers of inoffensive men and women, whose only crime would be that they were worshippers of the meek and lowly Jesus and centres of light and goodness in a corrupt and demoralised society. When the storm burst, as it would burst, they might be tempted to think that the government of the world was somehow at fault in this award of bitter punishment to virtuous and benevolent persons, conscious of the integrity of their intentions, conscious of their desire to serve a holy God, to do any good in their power to their fellow-creatures. Accordingly St. Peter puts their anticipated trials in a light which would not, at first sight, present itself, and which does not lie upon the surface of things: "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." There is no glory in submitting to deserved punishment; there is a peculiar moral glory in patience under unmerited wrong, if not according to any human, yet certainly according to a Divine, standard. "This is acceptable with God." Now, many men have said, and more, perhaps, have thought, about such teaching as this, that it is a splendid paradox. That a criminal should suffer what he has deserved satisfies the sense of justice; that a good man should suffer what he has not deserved violates the sense of justice: and if he submits uncomplainingly, he acquiesces in injustice. Nay, he does more: he forfeits the independence, the glory, of his manhood. His business as a man, knowing himself to be innocent, is, we are told, to resist to the last extremity, and to submit at last, if he must submit, under protest against the violence which deprives him of his liberty or his life. The precept to take it patiently is, in a word, objected to as effeminate and anti-social.

I. Now, here it must be remarked that for serious Christians this question is really settled by the precepts and example of our Lord Himself. "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that

ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but submitted Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." In His public teaching our Lord made much of patient submission to undeserved wrong. He pronounced those men blessed who suffered for righteousness' sake. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely. Rejoice and be exceeding glad." Not in exemption from suffering, but in truthful endurance, would His true followers find their peace. "In your patience possess ye your souls." Nay more, Christians, He says, are to welcome such trials. They are to meet the persecutor half-way. If smitten on one cheek, they are to present the other. They are to do good to them that hate them, to pray for their persecutors, for their calumniators; and their example is the all-merciful God, who sheds the light of day, who sends down the rain, upon those who set Him at defiance, upon the just and the unjust. For Christians the question whether patience under undeserved wrong is right, is a duty, is not an open question. It has been settled by the highest authority—our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. From His teaching there is no appeal. In His example we Christians see the true ideal of human life. "As He is, so are we in this world," says St. John; "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," says St. Paul; "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps," says St. Peter. And for thousands upon thousands of Christians in every generation this has decided the matter, and will decide it. If He in whom the prince of this world had no part, who is fairer than the children of men, thus came among us wounded and bruised for transgressions and iniquities which were not His own, why should we discuss the question any further whether patient submission to undeserved wrong is or is not a duty? It is ruled by the highest of all authorities, by the first of all precedents. "As He is, so are we in this world."

II. Although it is true that sin is followed by punishment, because God is righteousness, it does not follow that all human suffering in this life is a punishment for sin. The Jews came to think that, whatever sufferings befell a man, they must be in exact proportion to his personal sinfulness, and therefore that the very suffering and unfortunate among mankind were, so to speak, placarded by God's providence as the most conspicuous

of sinners,—that misfortunes and agony were sure proofs of known or undiscovered crime. The Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices were supposed to be sinners above all the Galileans. The eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were adjudged worse men than any of their contemporaries. Such a theory would have regarded a fire attended with loss of life, or a great railway accident, as God's revelation of a certain number of possibly unsuspected, but certainly very wicked criminals indeed. Against this idea the Old Testament itself contains some very emphatic protests. Thus the book of Job has for its main object to show that Job's misfortunes are no real measure of his sins. His unyielding resistance to his friends on this point, followed by the Divine verdict in his favour at the close of the book, shows that pain and misfortune are not to be regarded as always penal. And if the question be asked by some anxious soul, "How am I to know? Is this unjust humiliation, or this insult, or this loss of means, or this illness, or this heartache, a punishment for past sin, or a tender discipline?" the answer is, "Conscience must itself reply." Conscience reveals to man the true meaning of pain, not pain the contents of conscience. No outward sign marks one misfortune as a penalty, and another misfortune as a discipline; but conscience, with the map of life spread out before it, is at no loss for information.

III. In this glad acceptance of undeserved pain we see one of the central forces of the Christian religion, by which, as a matter of fact, it made its way among men eighteen centuries ago and ever since. The religion of Jesus Christ, embodied in His own teaching, and illustrated by His cross, has brought to bear a mighty force upon human life: the force of passive virtue. Heathenism knew something of active virtue. Energy for good in many forms was highly rated by it; but the passive excellences of Christian character—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness—were known very slightly, or known only to be despised as mean-spirited and effeminate. Yet, in truth, passive virtue often requires more courage than active virtue. In battle soldiers can often rush forward to the charge when they cannot keep their ranks under a heavy fire; and in life to do is again and again easier, far easier, than simply to bear. Patient endurance is, indeed, a moral accomplishment, in which, as a rule, women do better than men, but it is not, in the depreciatory sense of the term, effeminate. It belongs to the highest forms of human courage. Effeminate, indeed! It

is the passive virtue which has conquered the world for Christ. In the early Church there was no great stock of those showy qualities which take society by storm. Not many mighty, we know, not many wise, not many noble, were called. Few could speak or act so as to control the attention of mankind at large; but there was a something that all could do. All—such was Christ's strengthening grace—all could suffer in such fashion as to show that a new power was abroad in the world—a power before which pain, man's ancient enemy, had ceased to be formidable. Literature, social prestige, political influence, were all against the Church; but in the long run the old empire was no match for a religion which could teach its sincere votaries generation after generation to regard pure suffering as a privilege, as a mark of God's favour, as a pledge of glory. And if this way of taking the troubles which are laid upon us supplies Christianity with its force, so it secures to human life its best consolations. It will not matter much in the long run, if by discipline the neck of our natural pride is broken, and our old sins are finally put away, and love to God is purged from earthly alloy, and an advance is made in sweetness, in humility, in self-denial, in submission to God's will, in all the points which are least easy, even for serious Christians, to acquire. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us an exceeding, an eternal, weight of glory." "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 806.

Chap. ii., ver. 21.—"Leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps."

THE Great Exemplar.

I. That which strikes us first in the example which Christ has left is its faultlessness. We are startled by His own sense of this. He never utters one word to God or to man which implies the consciousness of a single defect. Read the lives of the great servants of God in the Old or New Testament—of Abraham, of Moses, of Samuel, of David, of Elijah, of St. Peter, of St. Paul. They all confess sin. They all humble themselves before men. They implore the mercy of God. Think of any great man whom you have ever known, or whose life you have read. He has feared God, loved God, worked for God through long years; yet he is full of the sense of his inconsistencies, of his imperfections, pervading his life and his conduct. He is

profuse in his acknowledgments of his weakness and of his sin. Nay, if he were not thus willing to confess his sin, you yourself would question his goodness, for what he says is, as you instinctively feel, no more than the fact. But Jesus Christ reproaches Himself for nothing, confesses nothing, regrets nothing. He is certain of all that He says and does. "I do always those things that please the Father." In this sinlessness He is, although our model, yet beyond our full reach of imitation. We cannot in our maimed and broken lives reproduce the complete image of the immaculate Lamb. The best of men knows that in his best moments he is beset by motives, thoughts, inclinations, from which Christ was utterly free. "If we say that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But this does not destroy—on the contrary, it enhances—the value of His ideal example. In all departments of thought and work the ideal is, strictly speaking, by man unattainable. Yet man may never lose sight of the ideal. In the Gospels ideal human life appears in a form of flesh and blood. It is the ideal, and, therefore, it is beyond us; yet it is not the less precious as a stimulus and guide to our effort at self-improvement.

II. And then, again, we are struck by the balance and perfection of excellences in our Lord's human character. As a rule, if a man possesses some one excellence in an unusual degree, he will be found to exhibit some fault or shortcoming in an opposite direction. Now, of this want of balance in excellence, of this exaggeration of particular forms of excellence, which thus passes into defect, there is no trace in our Lord. Read His life over and over again with this object in view, and, unless I am mistaken, nothing will strike you more than its faultless proportions.

III. Consider, again, a feature which runs through His whole character: its simplicity. In nothing that He says or does can we detect any trace of striving after effect. The number of men of whom anything remotely like this is true is very small indeed. The effort to create an impression is the result sometimes of timidity, sometimes of vanity, but it always impairs moral beauty, whether of speech or work. Our Lord always says what He has to say in the most natural and unpretending words. His sentences unfold themselves without effort or system, just as persons and occasions demand. Every situation offers an opportunity, and He uses it. He attends a wedding; He cures a paralytic; He stoops to write upon the ground; He

eats with a Pharisee; He raises a corpse to life; He washes the feet of His disciples, just as it comes, just as is right from day to day, from hour to hour, from minute to minute. The most important and useful acts follow on with the most trivial and ordinary. There is no effort, no disturbing or pretentious movement. All is as simple as if all were commonplace. It is this absence of anything like an attempt to produce unusual impressions which reveals a soul possessed with a sense of the majesty and the power of truth. Depend upon it, in the degree in which any man becomes really great, he becomes also simple.

IV. And one further point to be remarked in our Lord's example is the stress which it lays upon those forms of excellence which make no great show, such as patience, humility, and the like. As we read the Gospels we are led to see that the highest type of human excellence consists less in acting well than in suffering well. The ancient world never understood this. With them virtue was always active force. Yet the conditions of our human life are such that, whether we will or no, we are more frequently called upon to endure than to act; and upon the spirit in which we endure everything depends. Our Lord restored the passive virtues to their forgotten and true place in human conduct. He revealed the beauty, the majesty, of patience, of meekness, of uncomplaining submission. Experience has shown that Christ's Divinity is no bar whatever to an imitation of His life as man. And this imitation is not a duty which we are free to accept or decline. "The elect," says St. Paul, "are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God." If there is no effort at this conformity, there is no note of a true predestination. We cannot enter into the designs of God in giving us His Son if we are making no effort to be like His Son. Like the law, the life of Christ is a schoolmaster to bring us to the cross of Christ. After gazing at Him we come to Him out of heart with ourselves, emptied, happily emptied, of self, crushed by a sense of our utter unworthiness to bear His name, to wear His livery; and He once more stretches His pierced hand to pardon, and offers the chalice of His blood to strengthen our souls for such work as may remain to make them more like Himself.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 1091.

REFERENCES: ii. 21.—R. Balgarnie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 407; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a*

Year, p. 152; *Ibid.*, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 218; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 354; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 91.

Chap. ii., vers. 21, 22.

CHRIST our Example.

I. While our salvation is specifically described as the effect of our Lord's greatest obedience—that is, His death—yet, viewing the subject of redemption generally, our salvation is the fruit of His whole obedience. This is apparent from the plan itself of salvation, as revealed to the enlightened mind of a Christian in the Scriptures of truth. It was necessary that the High-priest of our profession should be holy, harmless, undefiled; that of Him, the Victim who suffered for us, it should be asserted and proved that He did no sin, and that guile was not found in His mouth.

II. His history has been before the world for more than eighteen hundred years. For eighteen hundred years the world has frequently made the attempt to imagine a faultless character; but no faultless character has ever been exhibited to mankind but that of our Jesus. His charity, His piety, His purity, His fortitude, His self-possession, His self-denial, His self-government—all prove the perfection of His character and confirm the judgment of His very enemies. They could not even ground condemnation on the frivolous accusation of the false witnesses, but condemned Him at last for that fact which is the very foundation of our hope: they condemned Him because He declared Himself to be the Son of God, thereby, as they correctly and logically reasoned, making Himself equal with God. The Lord Jesus was condemned for asserting His Divinity.

III. He is now held forth to us as an example, that we should follow His steps. The precise point marked out for our imitation is not obedience simply, but obedience attended with suffering. Our virtues are never to be trusted until they are tried, and they are never tried without suffering. The Christian, then, will bear his trials thankfully. He will thank God for removing from his heart even that which rends his heart asunder, because he knows that God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; that He only sends affliction to effect for us or in us some ulterior blessing; and that it is good for us to be afflicted, affliction working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

W. F. HOOK, *Parish Sermons*, p. 226.

Chap. ii., ver. 24.—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

THE Witness of the Apostles.

I. St. Peter says of Christ, with whom he had lived in daily intercourse, He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Wonderful and unexampled assertion that He whom he called the sacrifice for human sin, the reconciliation of the world, was no person whose name had come down to him from the remoteness of time, but One whom he had himself known! He had known Him, and yet he proclaimed this unutterable mystery about Him. Had our Lord been mere man, do we not know what must have followed a constant, near intercourse with Him? How could a claim to a supernatural spotlessness, as the Lamb of God, had it not been real, have stood such an ordeal? It must have vanished with the light of day and the constant scrutiny of watchful eyes. Yet it was those who had the closest connection with Christ who announced to the world the tremendous mystery which attached to Him, the mystery which, as St. Paul says, had been hid from ages and generations: that He was the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature; that He was before all things, and that by Him all things consist; and that it pleased the Father by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth, having made peace by the blood of His cross.

II. And were the Apostles men whose witness can be set aside upon any ground of weakness, want of judgment and proper strength of mind? I think it may be said that it would be difficult to point out any set of men in history whose judgment, so far as we can gather from their conduct and writings, upon a life and character would be more solid and more competent. Our Lord gathered about Him the choicest specimens of the Jewish mind, strong and vigorous men, as their after-life showed, men of solid character and understanding, who were able when left to themselves to carry on the work which He had begun with power and firmness, with a wise policy as well as an ardent zeal, and who showed themselves able to cope with adversaries and the assailing forces of the world. It was this company of men that surrounded Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. It was such men who saw in Christ the Man without sin, the undefiled Lamb of God, who took away the sin of the world, the glory as of the only-begotten of the

Father, full of grace and truth. It was the purpose of God to give us that special guarantee to the supernatural holiness of Christ which was contained in the testimony of such men, who had known Him, and lived with Him, and yet felt this assurance about Him, to show us that the belief in the mystery about Him had gone through the most trying of all ordeals: familiarity with Him. J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 278.

REFERENCES: ii. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 202; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 301; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1143; G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 133; Archbishop Maclagan, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 205. ii. 25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 222. iii. 1, 2.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 180. iii. 3, 4.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., p. 372; G. Calthrop, *Words to my Friends*, p. 346. iii. 4.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 264; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 168. iii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1633.

Chap. iii., ver. 7.—"Heirs together of the grace of life."

OUR Social Relationships.

I. Marriage is a relationship of mutual sympathy. That comprehensive word "sympathy" is to be understood here in its largest sense. Those who enter into this binding fellowship ought to be one in the completest measure possible of their entire nature; for the supreme end of marriage is not simply the continuance of the human race, but the culture and development of all the noblest faculties of the intellect and the spirit.

II. It is a relationship of mutual sacredness. The Roman Catholic Church includes matrimony among the sacraments, though in this, as in so many other matters, it goes beyond the direct warrant of God's word. Yet there is no question that it is regarded as one of the most solemn acts of human life. "Until death us do part" is the solemn vow, and it must remain unbroken to the end. All revelation and the distinct words of Christ imply the sacredness of this bond, and it will be a sign of coming downfall in any country when the inviolability of this relationship is disregarded.

III. The relationship is one of mutual honour. Christ ruled the Church, yet served it; then it is possible to rule and to serve at the same time. If it be for womanhood to submit, it is for manhood to serve; and perhaps that is a task difficult to both, but that might become much more pleasant and full of joy if the endeavour were mutual.

IV. The relationship is one of mutual responsibility.

W. BRADEN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 353.

Chap. iii., ver. 7.—"That your prayers be not hindered."

I. One specialty to be observed in this phrase is this: it treats prayer not as a duty to be enforced, but as a habit to be taken for granted. The Apostle seems to consider prayer as inseparable from spiritual life, just as the air we breathe is inseparable from material life; and therefore, instead of advocating prayer, he presupposes it. He does not enforce prayer as a duty, but he urges the avoidance of everything that can obstruct it.

II. Since prayer is an exercise of the spirit, of the heart, as well as of the lips, it follows that whatever clogs that heart with a consciousness of alienation from God, and whatever charges and loads that ethereal spirit with elements earthly, material, and gross, must press down that spirit, must encumber that heart with the great hindrance of its heavenward aspirations. If we have been allowing ourselves in anything irreconcilable with the principles of Christ, it is impossible, impossible with the stain of that misconduct still upon it, that the spirit of a man should naturally and cheerfully and spontaneously seek to consort and hold communion with that Spirit which is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

III. This, then, is the main notion to fix upon our minds, namely, that in any temptation, however trivial, to depart from the dictates of conscience, we should remember that yielding to that inclination hinders prayer, discourages all heavenward aspirations, shuts out what would raise us above the gross atmosphere of the world, obstructs the breath of spiritual life, and so puts spiritual life in jeopardy.

W. H. Brookfield, *Sermons*, p. 87.

References: iii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1192; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 271.

Chap. iii., vers. 8-12.

I. This is one of those texts which are too apt to confuse persons who do not read their Bibles carefully enough. They cannot see what the latter part of these verses has to do with the former. St. Peter writes that we Christians are to inherit a blessing, and hence people would say, speaking commonly, that he means the blessing of future salvation. But then St. Peter goes on to quote Ps. xxxiv., "He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile," and then, in order to make this harmonise with their view of the former verse, they say that this must be taken spiritually! Now, what people mean

when they talk like this, I do not know. That which brings a blessing here is the same thing that will make us blessed there; that which belonged to the old Jews belongs also to us Christians, and if we avoid evil and seek after peace in this life, then shall we inherit a blessing in this and in any possible life or lives to come.

II. And why? Because then only are we living the one and everlasting life, the life that alone brings with it a blessing or good days, and the only life that is worth living or loving. Very necessary is it to bear this in mind just now. People are too apt to say that the Old Testament saints got their reward in this life. But where do they find that? If they read the Old Testament carefully, they will find that the Old Testament saints were men whom God trained by long suffering, like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, and all the Old Testament prophets. They were not even made perfect; for in the Epistle to the Hebrews it says that they died in faith, not having received their reward. If, then, God rewarded in this life, their reward must have been spiritual.

III. God's world is good; the evil is not in nature, it is not in the world around us, but it is in our own foolish hearts. We shall find the world an unpleasant place, as the Jews did, if we break God's laws, for they must punish us; but if we obey His laws, we shall find the world a pleasant place, and His laws a comfort to us. This is God's promise, for He made all things for good, and His word cannot alter.

C. KINGSLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 229.

REFERENCE: iii. 10.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 44.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"Let him seek peace, and ensue it."

THE character of the man to whom these words are addressed is a very singular one. "He that will love life," or, more accurately, "He that wishes to love life, let him seek peace, and ensue it." Does not every one "love life"? What "life" is it of which St. Peter is speaking, the present life or the life to come? Certainly the present life. It may not exclude the life to come, for it is life generally, but specially the present life. But all life is one. This life is only one chapter in your immortality.

I. Is it a duty to "love life"? Unquestionably. "Life" is a talent committed to us. It is a great gift of God; it is an opportunity of service; it is a thing to be consecrated; it is

the germ of heaven. I have no sympathy with those who depreciate this present life, and run down this world as if it were all nothing or all bad. Heaven may be, as much as you like, an attractive, but this world should never be a repulsive, thing. It is a beautiful world! And it may be a very happy world. God is everywhere; the elements of good are always near us, and always within our reach, if only we could see them and use them. We are responsible for having a happy life. And even if we are afflicted and unhappy, remember it is the only stage of a Christian's being in which he can glorify God by patience and submission.

II. "Peace," then, is the climax of the conditions of a "life" that can be "loved." We must examine "peace." "Peace" is an empire with three provinces, and the provinces cannot really be divided, for there is one King of all; all belong to Him, and He is "peace"; He is "the God of peace." First, there is the "peace" which a man has with God as soon as he is reconciled to God by an act of faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, and his sins are all forgiven. Then there is the "peace" which every forgiven man carries in his own bosom: "peace" with his conscience. And then there is the "peace" with man, with all our fellow-creatures. And these grow the one out of the other; and they must come, and can only come, in that order. If you are not comfortable and on good terms with other people, it is mainly because you are not quite comfortable with yourself; and if you are not quite comfortable with yourself, it is because you are not right, and you know that you are not right, with God. "Peace" with God makes "peace" with the soul; and "peace" with the soul makes "peace" with the whole world: so the three provinces are one.

III. How, then, is this difficult quest of "peace"—more difficult as education and refinement make the feelings more sensitive, and the subjects of thought grow larger and deeper, and the divergence of mind becomes wider and wider, as it will do more and more every day—how, how is it to be carried out? (1) First, recognise it as an act of Omnipotence, an attribute of God only. "He maketh men to be of one mind in a house." You will fail if you do not at once bring in the great power of God to a work which is far too high for you. (2) Then travel to it by the right and only road; adjust your own relations to God. Be at peace yourselves. This done, you will be able to understand and remember at what pains, how patiently, how persistently, how stoopingly, and at what a cost, God made

your "peace." And then you can go and copy "God's peace" —that great Peacemaker with us all. Lay yourself out to see, and show, and learn, and copy the excellency in every one. Go about with a veil to throw over follies and mistakes, and a microscopic glance to see what is good in everybody and everything. Let it be your characteristic: a man of charity, a healer of breaches, one who has something kind and good to say of everybody, a lover of all men, and a suitor of "peace."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 37.

REFERENCES: iii. 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 166. iii. 14, 15.—*Ibid.*, p. 176.

Chap. iii., ver. 15.—"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

I. IT is the simplest of truisms that God can receive no increase of holiness, least of all from those who must beg Him to forgive their sins; but to sanctify Him, or to hallow His name, is to acknowledge Him, not merely in word, but habitually and practically—in thought, in feeling, in aim, in conduct—as being what He is: the one supreme object of obedience, reverence, and devotion. They sanctify Him who give Him His due, who treat His claims as real and absolute, who look away from all other powers, from all imagined resources or grounds of confidence, to Him as the origin and centre of their existence, the One most high, most holy, and most lovable, and, at the same time, most awful in His purity, with a reverential awe which leaves no room for lower fear, because it involves an adoring and loving trust.

II. See how the precept can be obeyed, and the consequent blessing secured, under three different forms of trial, taken as examples of the rest. (1) St. Peter was thinking immediately of apprehended suffering. Why not simply take the Lord at His own word, and put aside faithless anxiety about the morrow? If we fret ourselves, we shall be moved to do evil; if we place ourselves confidingly in the hands of our mighty and loving Saviour, we sanctify Him in our hearts as Lord. (2) Remember, further, that the drama of spiritual life and death can be performed on a humble stage, under conditions devoid of any impressive brilliancy. "The eyes of the Lord," open alike for scrutiny and for sympathy, are in every place, are scanning impartially every career. (3) When we are depressed and anxious as to the prospects of the Church and of the faith, we should be able to fulfil the duty of relying absolutely on Christ. It is treason to be fearful for the king-

dom of the risen One; our business is simply to hold our post, be faithful in our day, and leave results to Him.

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 302.

REFERENCES: iii. 15.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 208; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 277; W. J. Knox-Little, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 32; J. W. Burgon, *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 236.

Chap. iii., ver. 16.—"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

THE Conscience of a Christian.

The more consistent a Christian is with his Lord's example, or, which is really the same thing practically, the loftier his ideal of duty, the more he must expect to be treated as Christ was treated. Nominal Christians and the world keep an easy truce of mutual toleration, which the interests of society keep them from grossly infringing. On the one hand, the nominal Christian finds his profession sit easily upon him. Principles which are not pressed to their consequences offend no one. On the other hand, the purely worldly man makes the easy pursuit or easy enjoyment of things immediately agreeable to his ruling principle. He accepts the condition of not shocking the prejudices of others, though he may not share them, and so finds easy room for the nominal Christian in his system.

I. But when St. Peter wrote, things were very different. There was then no possibility of blending principles which were inconsistent in a neutral solution of indifference. The world and the Church were sharply defined and contrasted. They were mutually repulsive, mutually exclusive of one another.

II. True Christians must excite prejudice. They break that comfortable truce with the worldling which the nominal Christian is content to accept, and keeps without acknowledging by a tacit understanding. They must have reverses; they go too far for their friends in God's service, and their friends break from them. They intrude their principles where they are unwelcome, and others around them are offended in them, even as the Pharisees and Sadducees were offended in Christ. Against this power of prejudice, deepening often into ill-nature and malice, the power of a Christian's conscience, informed by faith and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is his great safeguard. Let us see how it operates. (1) By making him feel directly the presence of God, the conscience of the Christian becomes an

organ of the Holy Spirit. (2) A good conscience sets a man free from all unworthy motives. (3) As a consequence of this, a directness of aim and simplicity of character distinguishes the man.

H. HAYMAN, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 165.

Chap. iii., ver. 18.—"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

CHRIST Suffering for Sins.

I. Observe that St. Peter says, "Christ suffered for sins"—not merely suffered, but suffered for us—that is, clearly for our sins, for the sins of mankind. These were, in some way, the cause of His sufferings. If the sins had not been, His sufferings had not been. However strange the connection may seem, a connection undoubtedly there is between the sins which have been committed from the time of Adam until now and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross under Pontius Pilate. Perhaps the connection between the sins of mankind and the sufferings of Christ is made more striking by the word "once." Christ hath *once* suffered for sins. Sins may be committed often, nay, are being committed continually, but Christ died once and for all; that one event stands by itself; it is unique in the world's history; it can never be repeated; it need never be repeated.

II. A wonderful efficacy is attributed to Christ's sufferings. We are accounted righteous for the merits of Christ, and not for any merits of our own. Teacher and Example was Christ; but He was something more than this. Our sense of need and infirmity teaches us that, in order to be the Physician of souls, in order to supply a cure for the great universal disease of humanity, Christ must be something different from, and entirely beyond, a Teacher and Example. We want to hear of something concerning pardon of sins, something concerning reconciliation, something concerning being brought back to God. And this the Apostles preached in the name of their Lord; peace through the blood of His cross was their message, a propitiation for sin, a ransom from slavery, salvation for the lost, life for the dead—this was what they had to announce as the Gospel for mankind.

HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, vol. v., p. 305.

REFERENCES: iii. 18.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 416; F. Wagstaff, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 179; *Preacher's*

Monthly, vol. vii., p. 369; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 29. iii. 18-20.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 114.

Chap. iii., ver. 19.—"By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

The Spirits in Prison.

I. There is one article of the Creed which, strange as it may seem, for some centuries has practically fallen into the background, and lost its hold on the thoughts and affections of mankind. We repeat the words which tell us that Christ descended into hell, but they do not move us. Our thoughts about them are indistinct and dim. They bring no strength or comfort to us. To the taught they probably suggest the dark and monstrous belief that, in order to complete the work of a penalty vicariously borne, the agony of the garden and the passion of the cross were followed by the endurance for a few brief hours of the torments of the lost. We may be quite sure that if the descent into hell had brought no other thoughts to men's minds than those which we commonly attach to it, it would never have gained a place in the creed of Christendom, or seized, as it did for centuries, on men's thought and feeling. To those who so received it it spoke of a victory over death which was the completion of the sacrifice of the cross. It told them that He who came to seek and to save the souls He loved on earth had continued that Divine work while the body was lying in the rock-hewn grave. He had passed into the unseen world as a mighty King, the herald of His own conquests; and death and hell had trembled at His coming, and the bands of the prisoners were broken, and the gates of the prison-house were thrown open. There the banner of the King was unfurled, and the cross set up, that there also, even there, the souls of those who were capable of life might turn to it and live. There had He gathered round Him the souls of those righteous ones, from Abel onwards, who had had the faith which from the beginning of the world has justified, and had confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. There He had delivered from the passionate yearning of unsatisfied desire, and had taken them to rest till the Resurrection in the paradise of God, where He had promised to be with one whose lawless life had melted at the last hour into some touch of tenderness, and awe, and pity.

II. Whatever doubt might linger round these words is removed by the reiterated assertion of the same truth a few

verses further on. That which was preached to them that were dead is nothing less than a gospel—the good news of the redeeming love of Christ. And it was published to them, not to exempt them from all penalty, but that they, having been judged in all that belonged to the relations of their human life with a true and righteous judgment, should yet, in all that affected their relation to God, "live in the Spirit." Death came upon them, and they accepted their punishment as awarded by the loving and righteous Judge, and so ceased from the sin to which they had before been slaves; and thus it became to them the gate of life.

E. H. PLUMPTRE, *The Spirits in Prison*, p. 1.

REFERENCE: iii. 19.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 84.

Chap. iii., vers. 20, 21.

THE Two Baptisms.

I. The salvation of Noah by water. You are familiar with the narrative in Genesis. Peter does not recapitulate the facts, but alludes to them as well known. Eight souls were saved in the Ark and by water. God will have a seed to serve Him while sun and moon endure. For this purpose He chose Noah and his family as vessels to retain and transmit the knowledge of His name. If Divine power had not then interfered, the last remnant of righteousness would soon have been submerged under the ever-rising tide of sin. It concerned the plans and the honour of God that this should be prevented, and therefore Noah was saved—saved by water! The Lord saved Noah as He is wont to save His own in all times: by destroying the enemies who were prepared to devour him. Noah was saved by baptism—a baptism that washed away the filth of the world, and left him standing free.

II. The salvation of Christians by baptism is like the saving of Noah by the waters of the Flood. We draw near now to behold a greater sight. We contemplate now the redemption wrought by Christ and enjoyed by His people. We are saved by baptism; and this salvation is like the deliverance wrought of old for Noah by means of the Flood. (1) It is altogether a narrow and inadequate view that thinks of hell as the danger, and heaven as the deliverance. The danger is sin, and the deliverance is pardon. Your soul, surrounded by its own sins, is like Noah in the midst of the old world. If they are not destroyed by a flood, they will destroy you. (2) The deliverance. It, too, is like Noah's. We are saved by a flood. We

are saved by baptism. What is meant by baptism? "The answer of a good conscience toward God." It is the cleansing of the conscience from its guilt, so that when God makes inquisition for blood He finds no spot or wrinkle there, so that the conscience, when put to the question, answers, "Peace!" to the challenge of the Judge. It is by being in Christ that we may get our sins purged away, and yet be ourselves saved.

W. ARNOT, *Roots and Fruits*, p. 197.

Chap. iii., ver. 21.—"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

These words are very wide words, too wide to please most people. They preach a very free grace, too free to please most people. Man preaches his own notions of God's forgiveness, his notions of what he thinks God ought to do; but when God proclaims His own forgiveness, and tells men what He has actually done, and bids His Apostle declare boldly that baptism doth now save us, then man is frightened at the vastness of God's generosity, and thinks God's grace too free, His forgiveness too complete.

I. What hinders a little child, from the very moment that it can think or speak, from entering into God's salvation? I know one hindrance at least, and that is when the parents' harshness or neglect tempts the child to fancy that God the Father is such a father to him as his parents are, and that to be a child of God is to look up to his heavenly Father with dread and suspicion as to a hard taskmaster whose anger has to be turned away, and not with that perfect love, and trust, and respect, and self-sacrifice with which the Lord Jesus fulfilled His Father's will and proclaimed His Father's glory.

II. The catechism of our Church does not begin by telling children they are sinners; they will find that out soon enough for themselves from their own wayward and self-willed hearts. It begins by teaching the child the name of God. It is so careful of God's honour, so careful that the child should learn from the first to look up to God with love and trust, that it dare not tell the child that God can destroy and punish before it has told him that God is a Father and a Maker, the Father of spirits, who has made him and all the world. It dare not tell him that mankind is fallen before it has told him that all the

world is redeemed. It tells him of the name of God, and tells him that God is with him, and he with God, and bids him believe that and be saved from his birth-hour to endless ages. It does not tell him to pray that he may become God's child, but to pray because he is God's child already. It tells him that he is safe and saved, even as David, and Isaiah, and all holy men who ever lived have been, as long as he trusts in God, and clings to God, and obeys God; and that only when he forsakes God and follows his own selfishness and pride can any thing or being in earth or hell harm him.

C. KINGSLEY, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 29.

REFERENCES: iii. 22.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension to Trinity*, p. 1; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1928. iv. 1-3.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 51; A. Rowland, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvi., p. 225; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 333. iv. 3.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. ix., p. 24. iv. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 82. iv. 4, 5.—E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 160. iv. 6.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 353.

Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

CHRIST'S Absence and Return.

All the practical exhortations of this passage are founded upon the truth that "the end of all things is at hand." Yet, strange to say, there is hardly any passage of Scripture which has given rise to more frequent cavils than this simple assurance.

I. Some persons are fond of asserting that the Apostles were mistaken in this belief; that when they wrote the end of all things was not at hand. But the answer is, that the Apostles warned the men of their own age, and through them the men of every age, that by remembering the uncertainty of the world's duration they should assign to temporal things their true value and see that the true safety of a Christian consists in a life of prayer, and love, and active duty.

II. But there are some who object altogether to the hope of heavenly reward as a motive of action. Christ Himself, however, encouraged His disciples by such promises. St. Paul was stirred up by them to ever-increasing diligence and greater eagerness in pressing towards the mark. If we are not to lower our conception of goodness by practising it for the sake of future happiness, neither are we required to

"Wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky,"

and to exclude from the heart every feeling except a cold and naked sense of duty.

G. E. L. COTTON, *Expository Sermons on the Epistles*, vol. ii., p. 40.

REFERENCES: iv. 7.—W. W. How, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 517; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 260.

Chap. iv., ver. 8.—"For charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

IT is quite evident that the sins spoken of here are not our own sins, but the sins of other persons, and that the intention is to say that as hatred brings causes of quarrel to the surface, so love puts the faults of other people down out of sight.

I. Love shall cover multitudes of sins—from God and from man. Love by silence and by veiling hides from man, and by prayer and by converting hides from God. And yet, in all ages of the Church, men have built from my text the fallacy that a man's charities are, in some way, a set-off against his sins. Love covers sins. Love learnt her office where she learnt everything: upon the bosom of Jesus Christ. It is a good and pleasant exercise to substitute for the word "charity," wherever you find it in the Bible, the word "Christ." And see how accurately and how exquisitely true the sentence runs respecting all that charity is and charity does when charity is Christ. And this is Christ's blessed work: He covers the multitude of sins.

II. Your mission as a Christian is to be a coverer of sins. If you know of anything to any one's detriment, hold it as a sacred deposit, to be used religiously. Never think that you can make yourself great by making another less. Let it be your characteristic, the point by which you are known in society, that, like your Master, you always cover everybody's sins. It will be true religion.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1865.

REFERENCES: iv. 8.—G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospel*, p. 86; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension to Trinity*, p. 93; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 353; E. H. Plumptre, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 392. iv. 9, 10.—H. D. B. Rawnsley, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 93.

Chap. iv., ver. 10.—"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

COMBINATION.

I. Religion is, in one sense, a hidden thing—"a life hid with Christ in God." Acts rather than words are the invigorating

exponents of emotion. And doubtless it is the consciousness of this law of our being which in great measure accounts for that delicate reserve which makes it repugnant to all minds of the finest temper to speak much of their religious experiences. In secrecy lies the secret of their strength. And further there is another motive, and that, too, a noble one, which makes many Christians, especially among the young, chary of giving utterance to their religious convictions. They distrust their genuineness, or at least their abiding power. To many it seems much more easy to obey Christ's teaching when He warns them against ostentatious and therefore hypocritical devotion, than when He utters the no less needful exhortation, "Let your light so shine before men," etc.

II. And yet this last exhortation must not be forgotten, or received only with a lukewarm willingness to obey it. "As every man hath received the gift." What gift? The gifts of the Holy Spirit are infinitely various, but the greatest of all is the gift of Himself, the gift of loving God, of caring for the things of heaven, of having even a definite desire to be on the side of Christ, and not on that of His enemies. This is indeed a gift, and, like all gifts of God, it brings with it a responsibility. It is something which demands not only to be appropriated, but also to be traded with and devoted to the relief of others. If any one has, through God's grace, been brought to hate sin and to see its ruinous, soul-destroying character, let him not shut up this holy conviction in his own heart, but let him be glad to find opportunities for imparting it to others. By so doing, he will greatly confirm his own sense of its importance, and he will have done much to confirm the faith and courage of his brethren. For there is no cordial so cheering to the Christian soldier as the discovery that he is not alone, but that, while he has been striving to serve his Master in secret, others also, unknown to him, have been engaged in the same struggle.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 46.

CHRISTIAN Stewardship.

In the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature, God turns everything to account. He gave it a beginning by His own direct and almighty power; and He could just as easily, by the same power, carry it on to its final completion. But this is not His manner of doing. He expects it, by virtue of that principle of life which He has communicated to it, to carry itself on now, not independently of Him, but in reliance

upon Him and receiving from Him, just as nature is dependent on Him for the continuance of its vital and vitalising force. But still, in so far as instrumentality is concerned, the work is its own, not His. God did not give us the faculty for nothing. He gave it for use; He gave it that it might come out in its appropriate life, thereby always becoming more faculty, while it continues to yield more fruit.

I. Look at the nature of the thing spoken of: ministry; service. We are apt to look upon service as a menial thing. That may be our idea, but there is nothing more glorified in the Bible. Service, mutual helpfulness growing out of mutual dependence, is the law of the universe. So it is in grace. The spiritual sphere knows no other law. It is held together by it. Let us set this down as an unquestionable fact. Service is the law of our life, by which we rise out of sense to spirit; we touch angels; we perpetuate Christ; we repeat His example and keep His memory fresh in the world.

II. Observe the range of the duty. It is universal. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same." This makes the matter very simple. It puts an end to all casuistry and all excuses. And, indeed, it could not be other than universal, since it is the law of rational life. It is not merely the law of spiritually renewed life. It is the recognised law in that case. But whether recognised or not, it is still the law. It holds angels—"Are they not all ministering spirits?"—and they honour the law; but it equally holds men and devils who break the law.

III. The rule of duty: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same." It is idle to say you can do nothing, for if you are a Christian, you have received something. This rule applies to the form and to the measure of the gift, both to its kind and to its degree.

IV. Look, lastly, at what comes out of all this—this picture, if I may so say, of the family of Christ. (1) There is universal responsibility. It takes in all. The great is not above it, and the weakest is not beneath it. (2) There is universal utility. Every one is employed, young and old, rich and poor. Every one is a minister according to his gift. (3) A totality of progress. This diversity of gifts secures that every part of the work shall be done; for it is just love in its innumerable forms addressing itself to the world's innumerable needs.

A. L. SIMPSON, *Sermons*, p. 16.

Chap. iv., ver. 10.—"As good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

THE Christian Stewardship.

I. The manifold grace of God—the term is a remarkable one; it is that word by which the Greeks expressed infinite variety of hue or of design, the shiftings and glistenings of richly mingled colours or the dappled patterns of skilful embroidery. And by it a lesson is conveyed to us of no inconsiderable importance. We have not, I think, been good stewards of this manifold grace. We have been ever apt to look on the grace of God in one or at most in some few of its aspects only. We have forgotten its manifoldness, its many-shifting hues, its exquisite and inexhaustible richness of tint and pattern. In other words, we have assumed for the Gospel of Christ too exclusively theological a character. This has been the fault of the Church for ages. By setting forth the Gospel in its manifold points of human interest, we might have had much more hold on men's hearts, and brought in a richer harvest of souls to Christ.

II. Every one of us is more or less put in trust with this manifold grace, in one or other of its departments. And when we review the wonderful process of love by which it has been won for us, is it not a very solemn question for us all, for every one in his own case, "Am *I* a good steward of this manifold grace?" (1) Wealth is a stewardship. As a man's worldly means increase, so his charities ought to increase. (2) Talent is a stewardship. (3) Influence is a stewardship. If we use our stewardships as our own, His property committed to us as if it were not His, we cannot walk in the track of His gracious purposes, nor at last enter into His joy.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v., p. 15.

REFERENCES: iv. 10.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 60; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 287; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 228.

Chap. iv., ver. 11.—"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

GOD'S Scholars.

Consider—I. Our labours of the understanding. May I say, "If any man read, let him read as if his book were God's work," or as if he were God's scholar? We cannot make a Christian use of other books, if the book of God Himself be

not familiar to us. Nor, again, can we possibly turn common things into our spiritual food. We shall not easily be led to think of the highest things by the study of books on worldly matters, if even, when the occasion directly calls for it, our thoughts are still slow to travel heavenward. And therefore, if we would learn to read everything as God's scholars, we must at least read the Bible as such, I mean with a sincere desire to practise it.

II. Our labours of charity, or our acts of kindness to our neighbours. "If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." If we give but a cup of cold water to one of the humblest of our brethren, let it be done for Christ's sake. Perhaps the need of our remembering this is greater than we are apt to imagine. There is something so delightful in kindness, so natural in the wish to please and to relieve, so exceedingly sweet in the consciousness of having done good to others and in receiving the return of others' grateful love, that I am afraid our charity is very often unsanctified. There is no real goodness, there is even no safety from condemnation, unless we glorify God through Jesus Christ. All our thoughts and all our actions are unworthy of God's acceptance; they can be accepted by Him only in His beloved Son, He in our place and we in His, that as He took upon Him the infirmities of our nature, we might be clothed with the perfections of His; and as He died because we were sinners, so we might be loved and receive eternal life because He is righteous.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 193.

REFERENCE: iv. 12, 13.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 291.

Chap. iv., ver. 13.—"Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."

CONSIDER—I. What Christ could not, as a perfectly pure and holy Being, have suffered for sins. (1) One element of suffering for sin, and that a most bitter one, of which Christ could have no direct experience, is conscious guilt. Wide as is the range of its sympathies with the sinful, there is a line beyond which a nature which is itself sinless can never pass. Into that dismal region overshadowed by the gloom of guilt, and where rage the furies of an avenging conscience, He who "was in all points tempted" like as we are, yet without sin, could never follow us. (2) Another element of suffering for sin of which a perfectly holy nature could have no experience is a personal sense of Divine

wrath. Betwixt the experience of a guilty soul writhing under the frown of God and His there is an impassable gulf. (3) Nor, finally, though Christ tasted death for every man, could He ever experience personally that which constitutes to the sinner the very bitterness of death: the fear of what comes after death.

II. What kind of suffering for sin may be conceived of as noble and worthy, and so not impossible to a pure and holy nature. I notice (1) that which a pure and holy nature must feel from the mere contiguity of evil; (2) the reflected or borrowed shame and pain which noble natures feel for the sins of those with whom they are closely connected. (3) Christ suffered for sin, not only as bearing relatively its guilt, but also as its Victim.

J. CAIRD, *Sermons*, p. 167.

REFERENCE: iv. 13.—W. Boyd-Carpenter, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 97.

Chap. iv., ver. 14.—"The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

THE Ennobling Power of the Gospel.

I. Externally these kings and priests, these bearers on their heads of the Spirit of glory and of God, are invested with no dignities. Strangers and scattered, pained by ever-varying temptations, many of them slaves in the households of the heathen, all liable to be reproached for the name of Christ—such was their actual condition of humiliation and obligation; such, for many of them, was their actual present poverty and meanness of estate. They had been transformed, transfigured. From beings merely of the world around them, from the huge commonalty of character and condition, certainly from no assemblage of genius and culture, they had been refined into the family likeness of the children of God, by faith in Jesus. They had that upon them which, as we well know, made them an awful yet blessed power on the earth: the Spirit of glory and of God.

II. It was the nature of the message of Jesus to give to these peasants and slaves of Asia Minor the title, the aspirations, the courage, the wisdom, of citizens and heirs of heaven. It emancipated them into a Divine freedom. It raised them to a supernatural nobility. It taught them such things as facts about the soul and its future, about eternity, about God, as made them feel a totally new wonder and significance in themselves, their duty and their destiny; and so it led them to act, to live and die, with a purpose and in a manner that

answered in some measure to that deep significance. Nothing but the Scripture revelation of redemption in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory, has proved itself to be the bearer of all the fruits of the Spirit. Other things can produce strength without meekness, kindness without holiness, aspirations without repentance, refinement without love. The Gospel is formed to produce them all, as the direct result from its simplest elements, and this not only because it is the message from the throne, but because, being such, it remembers, and provides for, and addresses the whole of man: his misery and his greatness; his greatness and his misery.

H. C. G. MOULE, *Christ is All*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: iv. 17.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvi., p. 84. iv. 18.—J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 229; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 85.

Chap. v., ver. 5.—"Be clothed with humility."

WHO was so fit to communicate this command to man as the once self-confident, arrogant Peter? We can fancy, as he wrote the words, how his mind would go back, with blushing memories, to many a passage in his earlier history; and as he thought of the painful processes through which, by the grace of God, he had unlearned the impetuosity, the egotism, and the pride of his youth, he would say it with all the earnestness and the force of one who had felt the power and the subjugation of a besetting sin, "Be clothed with humility."

I. "Humility," to be "humility" indeed, cannot see itself. It hides itself in Christ; it lets nothing be seen but Christ. The best "humility" is Christ; it makes itself humility by losing itself in the humility of Jesus. Now, if it be asked, "Of what material is this clothing of humility made?" I should take you for the answer to that marvellous scene when, upon the margin of heaven, Jesus denuded and emptied Himself of the prerogatives of Deity, and put off His glory, and put on shame and weakness, that He might be a Brother to the people whom He came to save. I would bid you collect from all the humilities of the Redeemer's history the real fabric of the "humility" that you are to copy and to follow.

II. I am persuaded that the first way to grow humble is to be sure that you are loved The education of almost any child will teach you that if you treat that child harshly, you will make his little heart stubborn and proud; but if he feels that you love

him, he will gradually take a gentler tone. So it is with the education through which we are all passing to the life to come. The first thing God does with His child is to make the child feel that He loves him. He shows him that he is forgiven. He gives him many tokens of His remembrance; He heaps tendernesses upon him, like the angels' food, that was to "humble them in the wilderness." There is nothing which will stoop a man into the dust like the gentle pressure of the feeling, "I am loved." No heart will resist it. The forgiven David; the woman at Jesus's feet; Peter under the look; John in the bosom; the gaoler, first rushing to suicide, and then casting himself at the feet of the Apostles when he heard a kind word—"Do thyself no harm; we are all here"—all witness to that one universal law love, makes humility.

III. There is a false "humility," than which none can be more unlike Christ's or destructive to the character. It is of three kinds. There is "humility" of external things in a mortification of the body—a thing which nature likes to do, and which men generally admire, and call saintly. But it is a cloke, not a robe; a look, a posture, a ceremony. There is a great deal of self-applause, self-righteousness, conscious goodness. Self is denied on one side to break out, gratifying itself on the other side. The body is more vile, but the spirit is full of self-consequence. There is another counterfeit which Satan makes and calls "humility" (for there is never a work of God's but Satan is ready to counterfeit it); it is what St. Paul calls, in his epistle to the Colossians, "a voluntary humility," people thinking themselves unworthy to come to God. They put in other matters that God hath not required, and therefore "worship angels." And there are those who do not know it, but who, like Peter, are, under an appearance of "humility," indulging contemptuous pride. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." "I am not good enough to be saved. I am not worthy to come to the Lord's Supper. I cannot believe God loves me." What is that but the worst form of pride, giving God the lie and setting up worthiness as a condition to receive the free gift of God? True humility is to cast yourself so low that you just take, as a poor, helpless sinner, without a question, all that God is, and all that God gives, and all that God undertakes for you, as all your life, and all your peace, and all your salvation. For remember that this is the grace to which God has promised everything else.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 12th series, p. 13.

CLOTHED with Humility.

I. Humility—what is it? It is a gracious gift of the Holy Ghost. So far as it has respect to God, it is that docility which is willing to learn what God teaches; that conscious penury which is willing to accept whatever God proffers; that submissiveness which is willing to do what God desires, and to endure whatever God deems needful. And, so far as it has respect to man, it is that self-oblivion which is not indignant at being overlooked; that modesty which is not aware of its own importance; that considerateness which, in reproving sin and in trying to rescue the sinner, recognises a brother or sister in the same condemnation: and in this development it is near of kin to that charity which envieth not, which vaunteth not herself, which is not puffed up, doth not behave herself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.

II. Humility is the conscious penury which is willing to accept whatever God offers. And there are two things which in the Gospel He more particularly offers: righteousness and strength. Perhaps, if those who have never got the full comfort of the Gospel would look narrowly into it, they might find that the hindrance is a want of humility. By the door of the Gospel a God of love invites you to come into His peaceful presence; but though a wide door, it is wonderfully low, so low that no one can enter who does not stoop.

III. Finally, humility is that submissive and acquiescent mood of mind which is willing to do, to undergo, and to become whatever may be God's good pleasure. If a haughty spirit cometh before destruction, God giveth grace to the humble. Affable, contented, obliging, grateful humility grows in favour with God and with the people around, and never lacks the materials of a continual feast.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 389.

Chap. v., ver. 5.—"God . . . giveth grace to the humble."

I. THE humble man must be a spiritual man—a believer in Christ Jesus. Other men may be modest, may be retiring, may be unselfish; but the Christian alone can be humble. They want the great source, the central point, of humility. They know perchance that they are weak, erring, inconsistent; but only the Christian knows that he is a sinner. No man knows this in the inner depths of his heart until God's Holy Spirit has wrought there—has opened his eyes to see that in him which Christ came to save him from, and has brought him in

abasement to the foot of Christ's cross. Nothing can lead a man to humility except God's blessed Spirit, breaking up the hard and fallow ground within, showing a man what he himself is and what Christ is. Two truths of which the natural man is ignorant: (1) What he himself is. The humble man must know himself. The self-examination we need is a habit, becoming at length, like other habits, a second nature. (2) And what Christ is. In true humility, faith is absolutely necessary.

II. "God giveth grace to the humble." There is no difficulty now in seeing that this is so. For it is the humble who are ever seeking that grace. The proud have no sense of their need of it; but it is the daily bread of the humble. Prayer for it is to them not an irksome duty, not a prescribed form to be got through, but the work of the heart, the struggle of the whole man for more strength to walk in God's ways. It is to the humble, then, that the promises are made, "Seek, and ye shall find"; "Ask, and ye shall have"; "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 30.

Chap. v., ver. 5.—"God resisteth the proud."

I. WHO are the proud? One has the pride of birth. A long line of honoured ancestry has preceded him; he boasts of the blood of heroes and of princes. Fair indeed is his portion, and truly noble, if he be like the servants of God of old, perfect in his generation, not disgracing his descent by meanness of spirit, but rather striving, in the highest sense, to be the best of his line. But this is not pride of birth in the offensive sense. It is the pride of birth to stand aloof in thought from the poor and lowly-born, to deny in practice the universal brotherhood of mankind, to depreciate God's gifts and God's people. This pride of birth God resisteth.

II. Another is proud of his wealth. Here also it is none the less true that God by His promises resisteth the proud. The mere pride of the possession of this world's means—how does it make discord in all the course of God's government and God's redemption of the world. There is the day of God's final victory, when the rich man also dieth, when all his revenues cannot keep his spirit here on earth, nor all the splendour of his tomb preserve the spirit's cherished tenement from decay.

III. Another is proud of his power. But here too God fights against pride. The pride of another is his talent, of another still his character. "God resisteth the proud." As long as the

heart dwells in a fair habitation of its own, it has no place in God's spiritual temple; self-satisfaction is an insuperable barrier to the reception of the Gospel of Christ.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 15.

REFERENCES: v. 5.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 323; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 10; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 171; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 268.

Chap. v., vers. 5, 6.

HUMILITY and its Greatness.

I. Let us examine the source and ground of humility. This is drawn from the knowledge of God. Hence, where the knowledge of God is absent, the exercise of humility becomes impossible. It is in His presence and before the light of His majesty that the lesson is to be learned, not in the rude conflicts of the world, nor in the eager strifes of man with man, not in the heat of human passion, interest, or ambition; but in worship and devotion, the uplifting of the heart Godward, and the flashing of the light of God into the darkened human intellect. Humility begins with the knowledge of God, and advances to the knowledge of ourselves.

II. Consider the practical outgoing of humility. (1) It produces an absorbing and unmeasured admiration. For the worse we think of ourselves, the more adoring must be our sense of the sovereign love and grace, the infinitely perfect and effectual righteousness, of the God who has redeemed us. The greatness of God first abases pride, and then the knowledge of ourselves magnifies the greatness of God. (2) From praise and trust combined there will arise also implicit obedience. For admiration and trust exalt to the highest degree the glory of the Being admired and trusted. If obedience be hard, trust in God makes it easy, for trust goes out and up in prayer, and prayer, rising like a messenger, comes down again like an angel from the Divine presence laden with blessings, and bearing the gifts of grace and peace.

III. These three sentiments of adoration, trust, and obedience necessarily affect our relation towards our fellow-men. Let us picture to ourselves a man who is thus humbled, and say if he is not a strong man, and noble and honourable in his strength. The strength is all of God; the gift is of God; the knowledge is of God; the character in its appropriate relations is the character of God.

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 223.

REFERENCE: v. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1733

Chap. v., vers. 6, 7.

CHRISTIAN Work and Christian Rest.

I. Half, and more than half, of the practical faults in the world arise from looking upon life in a false view, and expecting from it what God does not mean us to find in it. It may be that many persons, when reading attentively our Lord's life and studying His language, are greatly surprised at the absolute unworldliness of both of them. He to whom all things future are as present suited both His life and His words to what He knew would be ever the chief error of mankind. He knew that social and civil activities were sufficiently natural to man to need no encouragement. He knew that knowledge would be pursued, and arts and sciences cultivated. But He knew that the kingdom of God and His righteousness would not be sought after. He knew that men would look carefully enough on the things of this life, but would care for little beyond it.

II. For ourselves then, and for our children, life is before us as a trial-time of uncertain length, but short at the longest, in which we may fit ourselves, if we will, for the eternal life beyond it. This is life to each of us, and this is our proper business; all the rest that we do or can do, however splendid, however useful, is, or should be, done only subordinately. It is not true that our great business or object in the world is to do all the good we can in it; our great business and object is to do God's will, and so to be changed through His Spirit into His image that we may be fit to live with Him for ever. This, then, is Christ's daily lesson to us: not to be idle and slothful in our work, and to sanctify it by doing it as to Him, and not as to men; not to be idle as those who have mere bodily faculties, who live only to eat, to drink, to sleep; not to be too busily and carefully engaged in our own labour, and still less for its own sake, as those who live only for themselves and for this world, and to whom God, and Christ, and eternal life have never been made known. Let us work earnestly, for so did Christ; but let us work also as doing God's will, and for the improvement of our own souls, or else our work will not be such as He will acknowledge at His coming.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 173.

Chap. v., ver. 7.—"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

THE Sympathy of the Divine Care-bearer.

Nothing can be more beautifully true to the real meaning

and intention of this passage than this translation. It conveys exactly what St. Peter means it to convey. Its rhythm is perfect. But we must be upon our guard that we do not run into a confusion of thought from the repetition of the word "care." "Care" can never be to God what it is to us. To a Being infinite in power, love, and leisure, "care" can never attach in its inferior and baser sense. The very reason why we should "cast" our "care" is that God cannot be made unhappy or weary by it. The fact is that, in the original of this verse, the word "care" is not repeated. It is quite a different expression which is applied to God from the one which is used concerning us. We may write it, "Casting all your anxiety upon God, for to God all that concerns you is dear." Nevertheless our version is admirable, and infinitely better than any other. It exactly carries the thought and the comfort which God meant it to do, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

I. "Care" is a word which is used both in a good and bad sense in the Bible. "Care chokes the word." Yet we are to "have care one to another." Quite literally, the word used for "care," in the beginning of my text, is the same which Christ employs when He says, "Take no thought for the morrow": and it is, "Do not split your mind; do not have a divided heart." "Cast all your corroding thought upon Him, for He careth for you." It is a delightful thing to do—to "cast care." It leaves life so light! But never think it is an easy thing. Here again the word God uses, both in the Greek and in the English, is very discriminating, for to throw, to hurl, to "cast," is not easy. It involves a great effort. Every one who has tried it has found it so. It is a very rare thing, and a very difficult thing, to do what we have to do, and then have no "care" about it. No words can say how blessed a thing it is when it is done. But it is no light thing to do. We do not lay these things; we "cast" them.

II. You must begin with the fundamental truth that Christ is both "the Sin-bearer" and "the Care-bearer" of His people. I do not mean that these two things are really different. Sin is the heaviest of all "cares." Nobody who has ever felt its burden will question that. But, strange as it may appear, it is often more difficult to "cast" our "cares" than it is our sins, else why are so many Christians so burdened with daily life and depressed with so many anxieties? Why is it that men who are sure of their salvation yet are not sure of their

constant provision? The fact is that in some respects it is a higher religion to trust God and leave all with God about temporal things than it is about spiritual things. We may easily deceive ourselves about our spiritual faith, and think we trust when we do not, because the subject is far away out of sight; but temporal things are visible, and real, and close; and we can scarcely make a mistake whether we trust God about them or not. They are daily tests of faith. And many fail here who think that their spiritual faith is strong. Yet could that be the case? Can we really believe in a God of grace when we do not rest in a God of providence?

III. But now the important question is, What shall we do that we may "cast"? How shall we fulfil this kind and hard command? (1) Realise, and take a large estimate of, the God of your life and of your providence. See His hand in everything. Feel His eye always upon you, and believe in His fondness for you. Never think of this world as being ruled by general, universal laws. It is. But think of what is as true, and much better for us to think of, though we may not be able to see the reconciliation between the two: that there is a particular and special providence in every little thing, and that God overrules everything for His own; that you are a centre round which the universe of providence circles. (2) When you say your prayers, pray about the small things—the things which are upon your mind at the moment. Pray about the things, whatever they be, concerning which at that time you are most interested. Do not pray vague prayers, the prayers that will suit everybody, but your own personal prayer, just as much about your worldly trial as about your heavenly one. (3) Live in the day: in the day's duties; in the day's trials; the day's strength; the day's joys. Live inside the day. "The morning and the evening"; "the evening and the morning"; and to-morrow heaven!

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 197.

REFERENCES: v. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 428; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 6; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, p. 297; W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p 149; W. J. Knox-Little, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 17; W. Arnot, *Good Words*, vol. iii., pp. 122, 124; E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 40; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 177; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 343; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 474. v. 8.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 375; J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 36; F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 297.

Chap. v., vers. 8, 9.—"Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren."

COMPANIONSHIP in Temptation.

I. St. Peter evidently thought that the conviction of companionship in temptation was meant by God to be a source of strength. We are hourly and daily assailed by sore temptations. Let us then remember that our case is not an isolated one. Other persons, our fellow-Christians, are being tempted in like manner, not, indeed, all by precisely the same temptations—for the tempter understands character and knows how to adapt and adjust his snares—but still in the like manner, by the engine best fitted to break down each individual's attempts at defiance.

II. Regard a man as suffering in the same way that you suffer yourself as labouring under the same illness, disabled by the same accident, wounded in the same battle. How the heart opens to him! What an entirely different interest he inspires! He is no more a man merely, nor an acquaintance merely, but a brother. Suffering creates families. It is the great adopter. And does not the analogy hold in spiritual suffering? Some biographies which tell us of religious struggles that have been very terrible move us to a certain awe. We recognise the sufferer as greater than ourselves, because he has suffered more. And that which we do instinctively feel of the very greatest spiritual wrestlers, we ought to feel in due degree of all those among whom we live. What a sacredness will they thus acquire in our eyes! Our temptations are their temptations, and a tempted soul cannot be uninteresting. Christ died for it. Christ's death gives once for all a solemnity to all human lives.

III. The thought that others are being tempted like ourselves leads us (1) to render justice to them and (2) to be ourselves upon our guard. The recollection that we are not alone in temptation, but that others are yielding to it and causing unhappiness by yielding to it, may well warn us of the great power, the widely extended domain, of the common enemy.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 320.

REFERENCES: v. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 419; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 299. v. 9.—W. Arnot, *Good Words*, vol. iii., pp. 125, 127; A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 292; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 74. v. 10.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 65; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 262; vol. xxix., No. 1721; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 193; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 26. v. 14.—W. Peacock, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 153.

II. PETER.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 285; vol. ix., p. 377; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 931; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 287. i. 1-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 551. i. 2.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 10. i. 2-11.—W. Boyd-Carpenter, *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 299; A. Raleigh, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 46. i. 3.—A. Maclaren, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 321. i. 3-7.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 35. i. 4.—W. Lamson, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 288; *Homilist*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 516; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 122; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 209; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 179.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"Add to your faith virtue."

FAITH and Fortitude.

I. We can understand why courage, the courage of confessorship, is placed in the forefront of these Christian graces. It needed courage in the outset. It needed courage, after the mind was made up, for the mouth to open and say, "I am a Christian." When the Jews regarded a man as a renegade and apostate, at once unpatriotic and profane, and when the Greeks regarded him as a fool and fanatic, it needed courage to say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

II. Mere physical daring is a fine and stirring spectacle; but there are few things more magnificent, or which do the world more good, than moral courage. It is this in which Christianity so abounds, and to which it owes its conquests: the fortitude of faith. The first plantation of the Gospel was a great fight; and there never were braver spirits than those valiant saints who came away from the foot of their Master's cross and went into all the world to proclaim the kingdom of the Crucified. Never was there seen aught like their tolerance of pain and their cheerful readiness to die, nor ever did conqueror go forth on his campaign with a bound more exultant than they set forth on each successive pilgrimage of pain and sorrow; and in their great tour of tribulation they strode from strength still onward unto strength. And when the worst was come, when it was not the spirit, but the body, that was bound, and the course was

finished, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand," or, as Chrysostom wrote in his exile, "If the Empress wishes to banish me, the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If she would saw me in sunder, let her saw me in sunder! I have Isaiah for a pattern. If she would thrust me into the fiery furnace, I see the three children enduring that. If she would stone me, I have before me Stephen the proto-martyr. If I yet pleased her, I should not be the servant of Christ,"—a firmness of mind which even Gibbon is forced to own is far superior to Cicero in exile.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. v., p. 341.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"Add to your . . . virtue knowledge."

KNOWLEDGE.

I. Among the different kinds of knowledge there is one department of transcendent importance. It is that knowledge which, in a flood of overwhelming illumination, burst in on the proud pupil of Gamaliel, and in a moment subdued him into the lowly disciple of Jesus Christ, and which in the case of similar fervid spirits has again and again produced the same effects. A man has too much cause to fear that he does not know the Saviour at all if he does not count as the most excellent knowledge the knowledge of Christ crucified, and if, in the event of its coming to a competition between the learning of the schools and the revelation of life everlasting, he is not prepared to count everything but loss compared to the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

II. But in point of fact there is no such competition. Add to your knowledge of the specific Gospel a knowledge of Scripture in all its various contents and in all its delightful details. To this add sound information and practical skill of every kind. There is a great difference between erudition and intelligence, a great difference between a learned or knowing man and a wise one. The stores of science and the facts of history in many a memory are like arrows in a quiver or like cannon-balls in a garrison. In the hands of a mighty man they are capable of great execution; but if the bow is broken or the piece of ordnance is honeycombed and rusty, the best ammunition will win no victories. And although the thirst for information is laudable, although it is pleasant to meet with furnished minds, and you are glad to encounter an industrious reader or an ardent student, you know very well that it requires a sound understanding to turn these treasures to useful account. But this is

no small distinction of the wisdom from above. It imparts understanding to the simple; and in imparting faith it gives that faculty to which all knowledge comes as wholesome nourishment, and by which it may be all again expended in a saving or a salutary power.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. v., p. 352.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."

THE Struggle for the Right.

The journey of life has to be travelled by us all. It must be made, whether shorter or longer between the cradle and the grave, and *the* point of consequence is to make it well.

I. And now a question arises of the gravest importance: What are the first efforts needed in the journey of life? The way of life, we know from the experience of the saints, if not from our own, from the teaching of Christ, if not from the whisper of our own souls, has many difficulties. It is like climbing the lofty mountain range when the crest, indeed, is white with glittering crystals, and the shining pinnacles take the sunlight at the breaking of the dawn, but to reach the crest there is a long and laborious struggle; there are intervening ridges, sharp and craggy; there are rough stones, which hurt the feet; there are deep gullies, where the water pours in angry torrents, and exposed, unsheltered platforms, swept by the multitudinous legions of the unpitying winds. Clearly have we to fix it in our minds for sake of others, if not for ourselves, that if such an ascent is truly to be achieved, the first steps must be planted well. To advance as we should advance in a Christian's journey, we must early learn the importance of the moral life; we must surely grasp the serious meanings of right and wrong.

II. What is the value, what the safeguard, of the moral law? Moral law is the law of liberty, belonging to conscious and self-determining man. It may be disregarded or set at defiance, for the subjects to it are free; but to disregard or set it at defiance is as sure to entail injury or ruin as a wild rush of some heavenly body, unrestrained by the laws which govern its motion, carrying with it devastation and the breaking up of worlds. The one law is of physical necessity; the other law may be freely obeyed or freely set at defiance; but both belong to the nature of things—come from the Absolute, and are of eternity. The Christian religion has revealed the personal life and love of Him who is the source of moral truth. It has shown us the moral law in its complete earthly relation in the perfect example of the life of

Jesus Christ. It has helped us to realise its splendour and our own weakness in attaining to its fulness, our need, therefore, of help, and our duty of high aspiration. It has made it vivid, living, sacred, near. It has reinforced motives, and revealed strong sanctions, so that without it the moral law would have less power of influence; without "faith" there would be a weakness of "virtue"; but it has insisted that "faith" was given in germ to the regenerate soul. One of the earliest efforts of the soul on its journey is a deeper sense of the greatness, the eternity, the claim, of the moral law; one of the first nearer steps is to make virtue a reality alongside faith.

III. "Add to your faith virtue." Virtue, whether it be what is called passive or active, whether it show itself in more measurable expressions in the outer scene of things or in the not less difficult but more hidden characters of restrainedness and patience, is essentially some form of manly strength. The pilgrim on his journey of life has ever to remember it that, to a great extent, he is made master of his own destiny, because, to a great extent, the formation of his character is placed in his own hands. We can, if we will, purify or select among our governing motives; we can, if we will, to a great extent, guide our acts. I am not forgetful of our inherent weakness as fallen creatures; I am not forgetful of the large assistances which we need, and which are supplied to us Christians by the grace of God. On these we may dwell in their proper places. But still it remains true that our acts are in our own power. By repeated acts, all moralists are agreed, habits are formed; and from the formation of habits comes the formation of character "Add to your faith virtue." In the difficult path of our pilgrimage, when we have to make serious decisions, when we have to be prepared for sudden emergencies, when we have to resist unlooked-for temptations, when we have to bear unexpected trials, when the well-being of others depends in no slight measure upon our conduct, when our own destiny seems at its very crisis, much, very much, will depend upon our having learned severe lessons of duty, having fixed deep in our souls the value and greatness of the moral law, having, in a word, by grace indeed, but by grace used with habitual faithfulness, added virtue to our faith.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *The Journey of Life*, p. 25.

REFERENCES: i. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 246. i. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 208; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 397; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 1.

Chap. i., vers. 5-7.—"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

CHRISTIAN Growth.

The word in the text which has been translated in our version "add" is a very pictorial term, and refers to a choir of well-trained musicians, such as Heman or Asaph led in the days of David and Solomon; and the idea which it implies is that as the different instruments of the great orchestral concert of the Jewish service blended together and produced a noble and harmonious outburst of praise to Jehovah, as the singers and the musicians each performed his special part, and all combined in one perfect unison of sound, so the growth of the Christian character should be accomplished by the harmonious development of each moral quality, and the Christian life, composed of so many different elements, should be one continuous hymn of praise to Him who is our song and our salvation. There are two ways in which we may add to our faith all the graces which the Apostle enumerates. We may add them as a builder adds stone to stone in his wall, or we may add them as a plant adds cell to cell in its structure. Both these modes of increase are used separately or in combination in Scripture to illustrate Christian growth. We are said to be rooted and grounded in love, and to grow into a holy temple in the Lord. We are rooted as plants in the Divine life, deriving our nourishment and stability from it; we are grounded as living stones on the precious Corner-stone; the double image expressing in combination the active and passive sides of Christian faith. And so likewise the combination of ideas borrowed from plant-life and from architecture to express the growth of Christian life unto a holy temple in the Lord denotes the two modes in which growth is made: by active exertion and passive trusting; by being fellow-workers with God, working out our own salvation, while we realise that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We have not only to rest, after the manner of a building, on the finished work of Christ, but we have to draw, after the manner of a plant, out of God's fulness, grace for grace.

I. The first thing that we are commanded by the Apostle to "add" to our faith is virtue, meaning by this term vigour, manliness. In our faith we are to manifest this quality. Our faith is to be itself a source of power to us. We are to be strong in

faith. It is to be to us the power of God unto salvation, enabling us to overcome the temptations and evils of the world and to rise above all the infirmities of our own nature. It is not enough that the Christian character should be beautiful: it should also be strong. Strength and beauty should be the characteristics not only of God's house, but also of God's people. But how often is the quality of strength absent from piety! Piety in the estimation of the world is synonymous with weakness and effeminacy. The world is apt to think that it is only weaklings who are pious—persons who have neither strong intellects, nor strong affections, nor strong characters. Young men are too apt to be ashamed of confessing Christ openly before men, under the fear that they should be regarded as something between milksops and hypocrites. And too many professing Christians are confessedly "feeble folk." It is most necessary, therefore, that we should add to our faith courage, manliness. Our faith should be manifested, as it was in olden times, by a victorious strength which is able to overcome the world, which fears the Lord and knows no other fear.

II. To this strength or manliness we are further commanded to "add" knowledge. In our manliness we are to seek after knowledge. The quality of courage is to be shown by the fearlessness of our researches into all the works and ways of God. We are not to be deterred by any dread of consequences from investigating and finding out the whole truth. The Bible places no restrictions upon an inquiring spirit. It does not prevent men from examining and proving all things, and bringing even the most sacred subjects to the test of reason. God says to us in regard to the holiest things, "Come and let us reason together." He has given to us the faculties by means of which we may find out truth and store up knowledge; and He wishes us to exercise these faculties freely in every department of His works.

III. But further the Apostle enjoins us to add to our knowledge temperance. This had originally a wider meaning, and covered a larger breadth of character. It meant sober-mindedness, a chastened temper and habit of the soul—a wise self-control by which the higher powers kept the lower well in hand and restrained them from excesses of all kinds. And this sober-mindedness, which expresses better than any other single word the true temper of the Christian in this world, is an indispensable adjunct to the Christian character. With wonderful sagacity, the Apostle commands us to add to our knowledge

temperance; for there is a tendency in knowledge to puff us up and fill our hearts with pride.

IV. To this self-government we must add patience. Our self-government itself is to be an exercise of patience. In our temperance we are to be patient, not giving way to a hasty temper or a restless disposition. As the plant slowly ripens its fruit, so we are to ripen our Christian character by patient waiting and patient enduring. It is a quiet virtue, this patience, and is apt to be overlooked and underestimated. But in reality it is one of the most precious of the Christian graces. The noisy virtues, the ostentatious graces, have their day; patience has eternity. And while it is the most precious, it is also the most difficult. It is far easier to work than to wait, to be active than to be wisely passive. But it is when we are still that we know God, when we wait upon God that we renew our strength. Patience places the soul in the condition in which it is most susceptible to the quickening influences of heaven and most ready to take advantage of new opportunities.

V. But to this patience must be united godliness. Godliness is Godlikeness, having the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, viewing everything from the Divine point, and living in our inner life as fully in the light of His presence as we live in our outer life in the light of the sun. And exercising ourselves unto this godliness, our patience will have a Divine quality of strength, endurance, beauty, imparted to it such as no mere natural patience possesses. In our godliness, as the Apostle says, we must have brotherly kindness; our brotherly kindness must be an essential element of our godliness. We are to show our godliness by our brotherly kindness. Sin separates between God and man, and between man and man. Grace unites man to God, and man to man. It is only when the higher relation is formed that we are able to fulfil perfectly the lower. But brotherly kindness is apt to be restricted towards friends only—towards those who belong to the same place or the same Church, or who are Christians. It must therefore be conjoined with charity. In our brotherly kindness we are to exercise a large-hearted charity. We are to mingle with it godliness in order to expand our charity, to make it like His who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Universal kindness of thought, word, and deed is what is implied in this charity. Such, then, are the graces which we are enjoined by the Apostle to add to each other, to develop from each other, not as separate fruits dis-

persed widely over the branches of a tree, but as the berries of a cluster of grapes growing on the same stem, mutually connected and mutually dependent. Such are the graces, to use the musical illustration of the text, which we are to temper, to modify the one by the other, just as the musician in tuning his instrument gives to each note not its exact mathematical value, but alters it to suit its neighbour notes, and thus produces a delightful harmony.

H. MACMILLAN, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 513.

Chap. i., vers. 5-8.

THE Golden Series.

I. It is no one grace which makes a Christian. A man may have great knowledge, but if he wants charity, it profits nothing, or if he be a man of courage, but without godliness, he is an hero, but he is not a saint.

II. Nor does any number of excellences united make a Christian, unless they be excellences added to faith. It is faith which makes the dead soul a living one, and so susceptible of every excellence. It is faith which joins the worldling to the Lord Jesus, and so makes him concordant with the Saviour, and inclined toward all good. Whatever courses there may be in the structure, faith is the foundation; whatever tints of splendour may variegate the robe of many colours, faith is the mordant which absorbs and fixes them all; whatever graces may move in the harmonious choir, faith occupies the forefront, and is the leader of them all.

III. But where there is faith all that is needful in order to possess any other grace is diligence. Give all diligence, and add. On the one hand, diligence is needful. These graces will not come without effort, nor remain without culture, and there are some of them in which particular Christians never become conspicuous; but, with God's blessing and the help of His Holy Spirit, diligence is sure to succeed. Moral worth may be compared to one of those lofty mountains up the sides of which there is only one path practicable, in other words, which you can only scale if you set out from the proper starting-point. Other slopes may look more gentle and inviting, but they end in impassable chasms or impassable precipices. But the man who takes the Gospel for his starting-point, who sets out in the name and in the strength of the Lord Jesus—there is no ascent of temperance, brotherly kindness, or godliness so steep but he may one day find himself on the summit. And with

half the effort which some expend on growing rich or learned all of us might become holy, devout, and heavenly-minded.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. v., p. 329.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"Add to your . . . temperance patience."

PATIENCE.

I. Of most things God has made the beginning easy and inviting, the next stages arduous, but the ulterior progress delightfully rewarding. Of this you have a familiar example in learning a language. So even in the Christian life: there is an alluring outset, followed by an arduous interval; and that once conquered, there comes the platform of even and straightforward discipleship, the life of faith, the walk with God. From their glorious high throne, with a perfect knowledge of the contest and with what we so lack, a full knowledge of the glory yet unrevealed, the King of martyrs and the cloud of witnesses keep cheering the Church still militant, and every several member: "Lay aside every weight, and more especially the sin that besets you, and run with patience the race set before you."

II. If patience be viewed as equanimity, it is near akin to control of temper; and need I say what a field for patience, understood as submission to the will of God, there is in the trials of life? The stoic is not patient, for he is past feeling; and when the pain is not perceived there is no need for patience. But the Christian is a man of feeling, and usually of feeling more acute than other people; and it is often with the tear of desolation in his eye or the sweat of anguish on his brow that he clasps his hands and cries, "Father, Thy will be done!" But this the believer, through grace, can do, and this some time or other in his history almost every believer has actually done. And though most have been so human that they were startled at the first beneath the stroke of bodily affliction, amidst the crash of fallen fortunes, at the edge of the closing grave, they have all sooner or later been enabled to exclaim, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "We are always thinking we should be better with or without such a thing; but if we do not steal a little content in present circumstances, there is no hope in any other."

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. v., p. 374.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"Add to your . . . knowledge temperance."

I. THE coarser or entirely corporeal gratifications are the more obvious sphere for the exercise of temperance, and in some

respects the easiest. We do not canonise a man because he only drinks to quench his thirst, and because his use for food is the restoration of his exhausted powers. And without converting the Christian Church into a convent or making one long Lent of the Christian year, we think it is often by greater simplicity in our tables and in our attire that most of us are to be able to do something for Christ's sake and the Gospel's.

II. The passions also fall within the domain of temperance. As far as they are implanted by the Creator, they are harmless, and it would be easy to show the important purposes subserved by anger, the love of approbation, and such-like. But, temperate in all things, the manly Christian adds to his faith the control of his passions. He neither lets them fire up without a rightful occasion, nor in the outburst does he allow his own soul or interests which ought to be even more dear to suffer damage.

III. All have not the same need of temperance, for all have not the same temptations. From the leisurely life they lead, from the even flow of their spirits, from the felicitous state of their bodily sensations, some are seldom provoked, and therefore seldom in danger of wrathful explosions. In the domains of appetite, passion, or imagination we all have need of temperance; and that man alone is temperate, thoroughly and consistently temperate, whose self-command keeps pace with every precept of Scripture.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. v., p. 361.

REFERENCES: i. 6, 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 10. i. 8.—W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 159; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 188; vol. ix., p. 341.

Chap. i., ver. 10.—"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

MAKING Salvation Sure.

I. In order to make sure one's own salvation, our first counsel is, Be sure of the great foundation truths. You believe that there is a God, and that He is the Rewarder of those that diligently seek Him; you believe that He is infinitely wise and good, true and holy; and you believe that you are a sinner, that you entirely lack that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, and that if you are ever admitted to the abodes of purity, it must be on some other grounds than your own fitness or deserving. The best evidence that you know these things and are persuaded of them is that you are

acting on them. As the best evidence that yours is the Christian faith, be sure that yours is the Christian character. If your faith is genuine, then, like good material, it will stand a heavy superstructure. There may be added to it temperance, patience, godliness, and every grace.

II. What is salvation? It is health of soul. It is God's friendship. It is a happy immortality. And how is this salvation to become personally sure? The first thing is to apprehend clearly what God has revealed regarding it, and then do as God directs: believe on Jesus. Rest on His atonement as the basis, at once righteous and gracious, of your reconciliation to a sin-avenging Jehovah; believe on Jesus as the gift of the Father's love and the exponent of the Father's character; hear Him in all His sayings, however plain or paradoxical; and follow Him as fast and as far in His beautiful career as weak and faltering footsteps can: and thus, with no barren nor unfruitful knowledge of the Lord Jesus, but with His own characteristics in you and abounding, your calling and election will be a subject of little anxiety to yourself and no anxiety to others, for thus an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 326.

REFERENCES: i. 10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 159; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol iii., p. 370; G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 177. i. 10, 11.—V. Pryce, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 392; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 123; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 291. i. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 179. i. 13.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 321; Bishop Ryle, *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 337. i. 16.—W. M. Taylor, *The Gospel Miracles*, pp. 101, 139; J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 365; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 372; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 476.

Chap i., ver. 18.—"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

THE Transfiguration: the Three Apostles.

I. What was our Saviour's purpose in making the three Apostles His witnesses? There were trials to which the Apostles would be subjected, and against them they wanted strength and a support for their faith. The Transfiguration was to give them this support. There they should see how the glory of the Lord shone forth from under the veil of His humanity; how life in the Resurrection triumphed over death;

how joy and rest in the Lord, such as Moses and Elias enjoyed in this vision, surpassed all worldly pleasure and atoned for all earthly pain. This help to faith is free from the notion of a reward. It was not the sight of a future reward that was held out to them upon the mount, but the sight of the present truth.

II. Consider the conduct of the Apostles. Of them it may be said that at the time they hardly comprehended what they saw, but that in after-life they felt its influence. At the time they were dazed and confused, like men just fallen into heavy sleep and then awaking to a strange sight. They darkly comprehended the Lord's purpose in taking them up with Him if they imagined they were to remain on the mount. Prayer has its luxury. Though it be hard to pray, it is sometimes at the end as hard to leave off praying. The peace of meditation has such a charm to soothe the unquiet mind, and to quell the unruly passions of the heart. To all who are thus inclined to God a voice will soon be heard to speak into the ear, "Descende, Petre; ora et labora"—pray and work. The life which the Apostles experienced after that wonderful night upon the mountain with Christ was the same sort of life into which Christians pass out of their quiet chamber into the business of the day, out of the aisles of the church on Sunday into the work of the world on Monday.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 198.

REFERENCE: i. 19.—*Good Words*, vol. vi., p. 101.

Chap. i., ver. 21.—"Men spake . . . from God."

AN Inspired Definition of Inspiration.

It is a definition of inspiration, a definition simple, precise, exhaustive. "Men spoke"—spoke without ceasing (even for the moment of speaking) to be men; spoke with all those characteristics of phrase and style, of thought and mind, of position and history, which mark and make the man; yet "spoke from God," with a message and mission, under an influence and an impulse, a control and a suggestion, which gave to the word spoken a force and a fire, a touch and a contact, a sight and an insight, unlike other utterances because of a breath of God in it, the God of the spirits of all flesh.

I. No testimony could be more explicit to the inspiration of the Bible than this. It is the testimony of the New Testament to the Old. And it is the Old Testament which needs the testimony. Christians have no difficulty in accepting the New

Testament. They understand that the Saviour spoke the words of God by an inspiration direct and self-evidencing. "We speak," He said, "that we do know, and testify that we have seen." They understand, on the strength of His own promise, that the Apostles were inspired by a direct gift of insight into truth, whether of fact or faith. For the inspiration of the Old Testament they can only look to the New. The treatment of it by our Lord, His constant appeal to it in controversy, His constant reference to it as fulfilled in Himself, the express assertion of its inspiration by St. Paul and St. Peter, are the grounds on which we, who were never under the Law, believe the earlier and larger half of the Bible to be, in some true sense, an integral part of the inspired word of God. "Men spake" in it also "from God."

II. "Men spake." "Human beings," St. Peter says; the "men" is emphatic. Men spake. And does not St. Peter as good as say, And remained men in the speaking? Where is the authority for supposing that the inspiring Spirit levelled the intellects, obliterated the characteristics, overwhelmed the peculiarities, of the several writers, so that St. Paul, St. John, St. James, St. Peter, might be mistaken one for the other in the finished work? These are the glosses, the fancies, the inventions, with which prejudice and fanaticism have overlaid the subject, and given great advantage by doing so to the caviller and the sceptic. Men spake, and in speaking were men still. Even their message, even the thing they were sent to tell, must be expressed in terms of human speech, through a medium therefore of adaptation and accommodation. St. Paul himself expresses this thought when he says, "At present we see by a mirror, in riddle"—see but the reflection of the very thing that is, hear but in enigma the absolute truth—"then"—in "that world"—then at last "face to face."

III. The two halves of the text are dependent upon each other. Men spake, not angels; that is one thought: not machines; that is another. Not angels, or they had no sympathetic, no audible, voice for man; not machines, or speech (which is by definition intelligence in communication) had been a contradiction in terms. These human beings spake from God. For He had something to say, and to say to man. There is something which God only can say. There is something which reason cannot say, nor experience, nor discovery, nor the deepest insight, nor the happiest guessing, nor the most sagacious foresight. There is a world of heaven, which flesh

and blood cannot penetrate. There is a world of spirit, impervious even to mind. There is a world beyond death, between which and the living there is an impassable gulf fixed. More than this, there is a world of cause and consequence, which no moralist can connect or piece together. There is a world of providence, which gives no account of itself to the observer. There is a world of Divine dealing—with lives, with souls, with nations, with ages—of which even the inspired man must say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; it is high; I cannot attain to it."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Restful Thoughts in Restless Times*, p. 315.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"God spared not the angels that sinned."

WE get but few glimpses into other worlds. What we have seen of them suggests that their moral history strongly resembles our own. Sin and suffering, holiness and joy—these seem to be the words which measure all moral development, and describe all moral conditions.

I. Angels sinned: then (1) earthly circumstances are not the cause of rebellion; (2) the flesh is not the only occasion of sin; (3) nearness to God is not inviolable safety.

II. "God spared not," etc.: then (1) righteousness is not a variable quantity; (2) law is not partially administered; (3) suffering can never be dissociated from sin.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 61.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., p. 931; vol. xxxi., No. 1820; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 108.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."

I. OUR text shows that God's severity on sin is an awful fact. St. Peter points (1) to the vengeance He executed on the sinning angels. Every argument which can be applied against the ultimate punishment of men applies with equal force against the punishment of the sinful angels. (2) To the destruction that fell upon the old world. It has been computed that the population of the world at that time was as great as now, owing to the longevity of the race; and yet the waters rose until the eight who rode in the Ark were the sole remnant of a world that God had made. (3) To the destruction of the cities of the plain. There were eight saved from the Flood; but in the case

of the cities of the plain only four were rescued, and out of the four one was turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back.

II. This particular act of severity mentioned in our text is to be an example for all ages. This is not to be shelved as a bit of past history. It is customary to describe the views of future punishment held by most of us as mediæval, and to declare that our ideas are mainly gleaned from what monks wrote and said and from pictures to be found in old galleries. I have never yet seen any picture from hand of mediæval artist half so dreadful as some of the descriptions that fell from our Lord's lips. Neither Paul nor Peter, nor any of the Apostles, ever uttered such words as leaped from the lips of the Man of sorrows. When God smites Judah, it is that Israel should take warning; and He who hurled the angels from heaven to hell, and drowned the world, and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha, has power still to smite.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 1004.

REFERENCES: ii. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 546. ii. 15.—J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 189. ii. 17.—J. P. Hutchinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 92.

Chap. ii., ver. 18 (with Ps. lxxxix., ver. 47, and Isa. viii., ver. 20).—"Them who live in error."

FALSE Theories of our Life.

I. There is the epicurean or pleasure theory: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Let us see how this creed narrows down our life to a very point, stripping it of all that is distinctive and elevating, both in range and duration, and shutting us up within the miserable limits of time and sense. (1) It takes all soul out of life. For the soul is its enemy, and a regard for its interests would be the very death of such a life. (2) It takes all heart out of our life. The sensual man is of necessity selfish. He is the enemy of society, the propagator, and patron, and pattern of evil. If all were to follow his example and live as he lives, the world would soon be such that even he could not live in it. (3) It takes also the intellect out of our life. For its own sake at least, there is no recognition of it. It is the minister of sense, the convenient purveyor for its appetites, the demon in the herd of swine, impelling us down the steep of ignominious concession into the foul sea of sensuality and indulgence. (4) It takes all the future out of our life. There is nothing of a pilgrimage here; the man is at

home. There is nothing of a warfare here; it is all concession together, all drifting down with the stream.

II. The ascetic theory. As the former theory robs life of its future, this one robs it of its present. The one makes the body everything; the other makes it nothing. That the ascetic view of life is an entirely false view I need scarcely wait to demonstrate. (1) It is not prescribed. The God that made us does not require it. (2) It springs from self-righteousness, and is deeply rooted in spiritual pride. (3) It proceeds on a totally mistaken idea of what sin really is, and of what the Divine Being really intended in making us what we are. (4) It fails to accomplish its professed design.

III. The pantheistic theory. (1) It destroys all individual responsibility in man. (2) It tends to cancel all duty.

IV. The perfectionist theory, or that which teaches the ultimate recovery of all creatures to the perfection of their nature and the highest happiness of which they are capable, and all this, too, it must be remembered, as a matter of necessity, not as dependent on the will of man, but as a certain result of the constitution of the universe. There is no limit to the all things that are to work together for good to the proper persons; but there is a limit to the persons, and that limit is formed by the very nature of God, which binds Him over by an absolute necessity to put a mighty difference between the good and the evil, between him that serveth Him and him that serveth Him not.

V. The theory that ascribes too much importance to circumstances. (1) It tends to make God the Author of sin. (2) It confounds temptation with coercion.

A. L. SIMPSON, *The Upward Path*, p. 169.

REFERENCES: ii. 19.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 45; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 129. ii. 20.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 189.

Chap. iii., ver. 1 (with John xiv., ver. 26).—"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

THE Way of Remembrance.

Here, then, the message of an Apostle, nay, even the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is identified with sacred remembrance—remembrance of holy words and deep impressions dropped upon the heart in the highest moments of life. The apprehension of Divine things consists, it would seem, not in new discoveries, not in strained and laboured thought, but in the reawakening

of the pure and simple mind and the gathering up of every Christlike image and affection from behind and from within.

I. This power, already known to Plato as reminiscence, is no other than that appeal to remembrance which Christ identified with the function of the Holy Spirit. This appeal, instead of passing downwards, like knowledge upon ignorance, or forward, like reason from point to point, moves inward towards a centre of faith and feeling that holds us all. It is by reversing our ambitious steps, not by advancing into original ideas, but by relapse upon simple affections, not by seizing new stations in philosophy, but by recovering the artlessness of the child, that we must find the joy of redemption and the wisdom of faith.

II. We have perhaps two sorts of memory, two ways at least in which we are referred to a prior state of the given object, and enabled to recognise it as not new. (1) There is the purely personal memory which reflects always the image of our individual selves, revives our actual experiences, writes our own biography, and hangs round the gallery of thought the portraits on which we love to gaze. Without this our being would have no thread of conscious continuity, our character no liability to judgment, our affections no root of tenacity. There are few lives which have not thus their secret store of natural pieties, their holy font of sweet and reverent affections, wherewith to rebaptise the dry heathenism of the present. (2) But besides this personal memory of our own past states, we have another, deeper and more refined, but not less real: an impersonal faculty which has another object than our own individual selves; a power of recognising, as ever with us, the secret presence of a Holy, a True, a God, that is not our own, that is above us, though within us, that has a right over us, which may be slighted, but cannot be gainsaid. When you wake up to the perception of deeper obligation or the consciousness of a sanctity unfelt before, your instant recognition of it is ever with you, seen or unseen, does not deceive you; it is not a new glory that is kindled, but the dull mind that is cleansed; and if the secret of the Lord were not consciously with you, it only waited till you were among them that fear Him.

J. MARTINEAU, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 92.

Chap. iii., vers. 3, 4.

RIGHTEOUSNESS the School of Hope.

Note—

I. The cause which led persons to argue that Christ was

gone never to return. It was the absence of change; the unvarying order and course of nature; the undisturbed, unhalting progress of events. "Things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Against this dead weight of custom we, too, have to struggle. The common and deadly form of unbelief in our time is the atheism of hopelessness, which, recognising no change in past or present, looks for none, and therefore believes in none, for the future.

II. It is not only or principally the contemptuous derider of Christian faith and hopes who grounds his rejection of Christ's Gospel upon the unvarying course of nature. Rather is it the jester, the trifler, the player upon the surface of things, unwilling and unable to be earnest and to contemplate the seriousness of life and its momentous issues. These are the unbelievers most abounding and most difficult to convince. The scoffer scoffs as a defence against himself. There is more hope for him, just for this reason, than for the dilettante, the mere butterfly of infidelity, who enjoys his careless life in the sunshine, knowing nothing of any hour but the present. He does not wish for a world purged from evil and redeemed by Christ; he sees nothing of the good that is already in the world.

III. But, says the Apostle, there is an end to come, soon or late. Sin, and frivolity, and the cold heart must die, though good is imperishable. St. Peter may be in part appealing to the fears of the frivolous and the worldly, but he does not think the evil of their life to consist only in the punishment that may be in store for them; he reminds them that there can be no place for them in the new and redeemed world which God has promised, for the essence of the new heaven and the new earth for which they looked was that "therein dwelleth righteousness."

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 210.

Chap. iii., ver. 4.—"Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

THE Promise of His Coming.

I. Here we have the language of those moods of the human soul which lead in the end to entire rejection of the second coming of Christ. (1) "Where is the promise of His coming?" See here the language of natural impatience. To many a man, in religious as in other things, the one thing that he cannot put up with is to be kept waiting. He gets angry

with Almighty God when a truth is not immediately verified, when a grace is not instantaneously given, when a promise is not kept without delay. He gets angry with God, just as he would with an inconsiderate or neglectful servant who kept him standing at his front door, exposed to the wind and to the rain, instead of hurrying to open it at once. This was the temper of some souls at the close of the apostolic age. They had fled for refuge from the storms of heathen life, from falling fortunes, from blighted hopes, to lay hold on the hope set before them. They wanted to see as soon as possible with their bodily eyes the object of their hope. Years had passed since the ascension of Christ to heaven; yet He had not come to judgment. The Apostles, those first fathers of the faith, had one after another fallen asleep; yet Christ had not come to judgment. The first generation of believers, then the second, then perhaps the third, had passed away; yet Christ had not come to judgment. Why this delay? Why this protracted expectation? Why these disappointed hopes? Was He, was He, coming at all? Why should men wait for that which they had expected so earnestly, expected so long, why hope almost against hope for a fulfilment of the promise of the Advent? (2) "Where is the promise of His coming?" Here we have the language of incipient disbelief in a supernatural event yet to come. I say, "yet to come." It is easier to believe in that which is above nature in a distant past, than at the present moment, or in a future which may be upon us at any moment. Many a man will believe in miracles eighteen hundred years ago who would not have believed in them at the time, who would not believe in the same miracles with the same evidence in their favour now. The promise of Christ's coming in bygone ages, as now, has seemed to be in conflict with the idea that the supernatural has passed away for good, and that henceforth only such events as can be brought within that circle of causes which we term "nature" can reasonably be expected. (3) "Where is the promise of His coming?" There is a kind of half-faith, half-unbelief, which receives Christ with one hand, which repels Him with the other, which is willing to admit much about Him, but not to admit all that He says about Himself. In this state of mind men are glad that He came to teach, to save them, to leave them an example, that they should follow His steps, nay, to "bear their sins in His own body on the tree." "He has done all this," they say to themselves. "He has died, risen, left this world. He is seated in a distant

world on a throne of glory." And, if they said out quite frankly what they feel and think, they would add that they are grateful for what He has done, but that for the future they wish to be left alone, left to themselves, left with their memories about Him.

II. Let us place ourselves under St. Peter's guidance, and see how he deals with this way of looking at things in the verses which follow my text. (1) Now, first of all, he raises the question of fact. The objector says to him that there have been no catastrophes, and that, therefore, none are to be expected. St. Peter points to the Deluge. The Deluge, whatever else may be said of it, was a catastrophe both in the history of nature and in the history of man. All through the ages during which man has inhabited this planet, and we know anything of his annals, there has been a succession of tragic occurrences, whether on the face of nature, or in the realm of human history. Holy Scripture calls these occurrences judgments, and they are judgments. They effect on a small scale, and for a race, or a generation, or a family, or a man, what the universal judgment will effect once for all for all the races of men. Sometimes they are the work of nature, or, to speak as Christians ought to speak, the work of God in nature. Such in the old days of the patriarchal history was the destruction of the corrupt cities of the plain—Sodom, Gomorrah, and the rest. Such in the splendid days of the Roman empire, and in a neighbourhood most favoured by the wealthy citizens of the capital of the world, was the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum. In the last century, our great-grandfathers were accustomed to look upon the earthquake of Lisbon as an event of this character; and that mighty wave which, along the seaboard of Bengal, the other day swept some two hundred thousand and odd human beings into eternity, is a recent instance of nature doing what it will achieve hereafter on a yet more gigantic scale, winding up the account of a vast number of reasonable creatures with the God who made them. It is a mere difference, you will remark, of the area or scale of the operation. The principle is the same as that of the Deluge, the same as that of the convulsions which will accompany the coming of the Son of man. (2) And, secondly, St. Peter grapples with the complaint that the Second Advent is so long delayed: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." For the infinite mind time means nothing.

There is no such thing for Him as delay. For Him all that will be is. The only question is how and when it will be unrolled to us. True, we may have to wait, we know not how long. (3) But, thirdly, can a reason be assigned for the delay, as it seems to us, of Christ's coming to judgment? We know that this delay is not accidental; we know that it is not enforced; we know that it is not the result of caprice. But then what is its reason? St. Peter answers this question too. He says that there is a moral purpose, highly in accordance with the revealed character of God, in this delay: "God is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." As love was the motive which moved God to surround Himself with created beings who could never, as He knew, repay Him for the privilege of existence, so in love does He still linger over the work of His hands when it has forfeited all title to exist. As "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," so He would fain extend, though it were to no purpose, the priceless blessings of this redemption so long as any soul may be redeemed. The delay is not accidental; it is not capricious; still less is it forced; it is dictated by the throbbings of the heart of God bending over the moral world in an unspeakable compassion.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit, New Series*, No. 903.

Chap. iii., ver. 4.—"Where is the promise of His coming?"

THE Three Comings of Christ.

The Scripture speaks of the three comings of our Lord Jesus Christ: the historical coming "in great humility" more than eighteen centuries ago, and the future coming "in glorious majesty" at a day and an hour when we think not, and the present coming of Christ into the hearts of His true servants, and through them into the world. This we should call a spiritual coming.

I. I would remind you of the simple historical fact that less than two thousand years ago Jesus Christ came into this world. The more thoughtful we are, and in proportion partly to our age, partly to the range of our intellect, chiefly to our acquaintance with the things of God, will the real richness and manifold significance of Christ's coming upon earth be felt by us. My present object is simply to remind you of it, to

counsel you amid the busy, exciting rush of life to think once again over this most extraordinary and most momentous of all historical facts, the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in great humility, and the complete revolution in the history of the world which His presence inaugurated, His love and holiness inspired, while His Divine power rendered it possible and permanent.

II. There is a second coming of Jesus Christ. It is often spoken of by the name of the "Second Advent." "We believe that He will come to be our Judge." This human life of ours on earth is not intended by God, who gave it, to last for ever. Here it is stamped by three dark shadows: the shadow of sin, the shadow of sorrow, and the awful shadow of death. They will not be for ever. There will be a close of what is expressively, if unconsciously, called this earthly "scene"; and then a great change will come. Jesus Christ will be revealed to good and bad alike with a "glorious majesty" that may be either feared or welcomed, but cannot be questioned or ignored. "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away."

III. We must speak, lastly, of His third coming: His coming now into our hearts—shall I say His actual coming or His desires, His efforts, to come? Try to believe that Jesus Christ is striving to enter your hearts. Whenever you feel your hearts touched; whenever your relish for prayer is quickened; whenever you are more certain that you are heard; whenever the call of duty sounds loud in your ears, bidding you be more bold and decided than heretofore in your Master's service; whenever you come to hate, as hateful to Him, some form of evil which you had hitherto tolerated, this is for you an advent of Christ. Then is He indeed knocking at the door of your hearts, urging you to let Him enter and "make His abode with you." H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 292.

REFERENCES: iii. 4.—R. L. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 269; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, 2nd series, p. 1; H. P. Liddon, *Advent Sermons*, vol. i., p. 300; W. Skinner, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 107. iii. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 109; J. Keble, *Sermons for Advent*, p. 58; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 447; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 4. iii. 9.—E. Garbett, *The Soul's Life*, p. 357.

Chap. iii., ver. 10.—"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

THE Suddenness of the Advent.

This truth of the suddenness of the advent of Christ we do

not perhaps take sufficiently to heart; but if it be a truth that the second advent of Christ will be sudden, then some very important questions will arise out of that truth, which, whether welcome or unwelcome, must not be withdrawn from our consideration.

I. Let us look how far this truth of the suddenness of the coming of Christ is set forth in the Gospel. That the day of the Lord is to come suddenly is a truth laid down in the New Testament, not in one place only (though that would have been enough to make it true, as we have said, and, being true, to make it important), but in several places. It thus becomes a feature in the future aspect of the coming of the Son of man to be carefully borne in mind at all times when treating of this subject. "The day of the Lord shall come, and all men shall see the light." The similitude of the thief is used in the text also as showing the striking suddenness of the Second Advent.

II. What is the inference from the suddenness of Christ's coming as to the probable state of the world at that time? Were Christ to appear in the present age of the world, He would come suddenly to most of us. He is not generally expected. Few of us think of His actual appearance, though the hope of His coming is extensive enough. If, then, He is to come suddenly in whatsoever age of the world He may come, it is probable that the state of the world will be very much the same as it is in our own age, neither much better nor much worse. We may also infer from this suddenness, which is so frequently and specially predicted, that the world will not be prepared for Christ's advent, for that the Lord will come suddenly when He does come does but show that there will be as little preparation then as there is now, and His coming will be sudden to most of us, owing to our own want of preparation. This truth, then, of the suddenness of the day of the Lord is a very practical one. Death is not necessarily sudden, but the coming of the Son of man is. Death is sudden always to those who are not prepared for it. And yet how few of us can endure to think upon the possibility of a sudden death! How many are there who are not prepared for death at all! Remember that they only are prepared to die who are prepared for a sudden death; and they only are prepared for the coming of the Son of man who are prepared for His coming suddenly. Preparation for the one involves preparation for the other.

A. B. EVANS, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 65.

REFERENCE: iii. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1125.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

ADVENT.

I. The Apostles lived, and prayed, and laboured in the continual expectation that Christ would come again to them, and speedily, and that this promise would be fulfilled in their own lifetime. Thus He was always at the door of their life; and their attitude was just that in which we listen for every footfall, and watch the door that is soon to open when we are waiting for some honoured and expected visitant. And this eager, hopeful belief of theirs laid its strong hand on all their converts; the eye of every Christian was turned upwards every day with a strange sense of expectant awe. The mysterious vault of the sky overhead was to them not an unfathomable immensity peopled with unknown worlds, but the curtain which shut out from their vision the throne of God, and they expected it to open before them at any moment. This expectation was one of their chief means of grace. It supported them through unparalleled difficulties and suffering; it made them feel all the burdens of their painful life comparatively light, because heaven was at their doors, and the reign of Christ was expected shortly to begin. Through the force of this expectancy they were, in fact, risen with Christ, their thoughts were fixed on things above, their home was at the right hand of God, in a far stronger sense than can be said of any of us.

II. After the lapse of eighteen hundred years we have learned rather to feel that with the Lord a thousand years are as one day, and that we cannot read the signs of His final coming; but we have lost thereby what was to those who laid the foundation of Christian life among men an all-powerful incentive to absolute and entire devotion to the service of Christ. Let us try to build up our life on a foundation of fear and reverence. Let us catch something, some faint reflection, of that spirit in which men once approached Him of the incommunicable name, and whom we, out of reverence, have styled "Lord." We cannot recall or recover those vivid expectations which filled the soul of the apostolic Christian, because we have learned by a long experience that we know not the end nor what we shall be, and that we cannot read the signs of any millennial time; but we can learn to wait for Him with the feeling of those who are in a holy presence, and waiting daily for that presence to manifest itself in clearer light and greater glory.

J. PERCIVAL, *Some Helps for School Life*, p. 206.

Chap. iii., ver. 12.—"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

FROM the Bibles that have marginal readings, it will appear that these words admit of a different construction: "Looking for and *hasting the coming* of the day of God." As I understand the intention of God in the place, His will and command is this: that we should do both—"hasting unto," and ourselves "hastening," "the coming of the day of God."

I. But now the question necessarily presents itself, Can anything which a man does really "hasten," by a single moment, such an event as the second coming of Christ? In every age Christians are to be praying and labouring for the extension of the Gospel over the whole earth. They are so to pray and so to labour as if they knew that the conversion of the world would be given to their faith, their diligence, and their love. And so labouring and so praying, they may command results. The Church shall grow; souls shall be saved; God shall be glorified. But, nevertheless, all this is only the earnest of a better dispensation—the falling drops which tell that the shower is coming.

II. But can mortal wishes or mortal feelings accelerate that "day of God"? Assuredly. God has oftentimes, in His mercy, changed His times for His people's sake, in answer to their supplications, and in consideration of what they said and did. Many things have gone back. Death has retired for fifteen years. The destruction of a city has been postponed indefinitely when it had been most decidedly declared as imminent "within forty days." Great calamities, threatening a king and his people, have been handed down to the third and fourth generations. But has anything with God gone forward? Has the shadow on the dial ever gone on? "In those days shall be affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days"— What does that "shortening" mean? That the day of deliverance, the fixed day of deliverance, was put forward "for the elect's sake." Then here is a great and happy event "hastening" on for man. God Himself has ever instilled the thought that there are certain things which for a period let or hinder the accomplishment of prophecy.

III. What, then, must we do to "hasten the day of God"? (1) Pray for it. What is the promise ought always to be emphatically the prayer of the dispensation. When we pray

for any promise, what the prayer means is that we pray it to "come quickly." Is the Second Advent an exception? Nay; has not our Lord encouraged us when He has given us His words, that ourselves may have the echo—for all prayer, if rightly looked at, is the echo of God's word—"Surely I come quickly"? Well, therefore, does the Church, in the most solemn of her services, teach us, over every opening grave, to say, "Accomplish the number of Thine elect, and hasten Thy kingdom." (2) Let the Church live in love and union, in order that a united Church may attract her Lord to "come." We can never forget that in His own last prayer He linked together inseparably the unity and the glory of His people—our oneness with His return. (3) Make great efforts for the evangelisation of the world. There are three things which have to be done before our Lord can "come." The "knowledge" of Him must be coextensive with the habitable globe, the appointed sheaves of the Gospel harvest must be gathered in, and the Jews must be brought back to their own land and to Him. The first is already well-nigh accomplished; the second is altogether in the bosom of God; the third we must promote. (4) Cultivate personal holiness, as for every other reason, so for this: that every one who really loves God, and serves God, and is like God, as far as in him lies, is making that preparation by which the Church is to be ready for her Lord, just as "a bride is adorned for her husband." Will He "come" until His bride has put on her jewels? And when she is decked and when she is meet indeed, can He stay away? It seems to be the law of all that is great that its movement at first is slow, and grows rapid at the last. We have seen it with the mercies and with the judgments of God; will it not be so with that grandest event which goes to make the climax of our world's history?

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 12th series, p. 197.

REFERENCES: iii. 12.—H. P. Liddon, *Advent Sermons*, vol. ii., pp. 133, 148, 162, 177; Bishop Barry, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 374.

Chap. iii., ver. 13.—"We, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

I. THE man who saw this vision may be described as a dreamer, and the glorious dream which he has put before us here still waits for its fulfilment. But dreamers are the pioneers of workers, and there are few movements of progress which

have not had them amongst their leaders. It is the dreamer by whom the thought is first presented. A glorious dream surely is this: "A new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." There is, in fact, something pathetic in the attention that is given to every man who professes to have seen a vision or dreamed a dream provided only it be one that promises to deliver us from the power of that callous selfishness which has made the lives of multitudes so bare of all enjoyment, so full of care and misery, so abandoned to vice and wickedness. The new prophet may have little help to give, but he is heard, and heard with a patient thoughtfulness which indicates the desire to profit by any hint for a solution of the terrible problems by which the minds of enlightened men are exercised. The danger of the hour is scarcely "faithless coldness."

II. It would be useless, indeed, to deceive ourselves into the belief that some marvellous change has come over the spirits of men, that the demon of selfishness has been exorcised, that the lessons of the past have been wisely learned, and that we are about, under the influence of nobler thoughts and purposes, to enter upon an uninterrupted course of reform. In times of depression, looking at the force of opposition which all such changes have to encounter, a feeling of despair comes over the heart. The inroads made upon the kingdom of selfishness seem but small, and are with difficulty effected. The tendencies which in the past have not been altogether infrequent to reaction awaken the fear that the date of reform must be postponed to a very distant future. But in such moods we show not only a lack of faith, but also an inability to read correctly the signs of the times. We are progressing; we are in the midst of changes whose full significance we do not yet appreciate. The Church and the world are feeling the living forces of the Gospel as they have never felt them before. The victory is not yet, but the signs of success are many. We, at least, who believe in Christ "according to His promise look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

J. GUINNESS ROGERS, *Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 1892.

REFERENCES: iii. 13.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 257. iii. 14.—R. Roberts, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 116; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 326. iii. 14, 15.—R. L. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 15; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 214. iii. 15, 16.—G. Dawson, *Sermons on Disputed Points*, p. 166.

Chap. iii., ver. 16.—"Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

CONSIDER the best means of avoiding the danger of professing to honour the word of God while yet you degrade it to purposes most alien from its spirit.

I. First, I would say, study the Scriptures. What a source of mischief is a rude and blind literalism! What ravages have been wrought in the use of Scripture by utter neglect of the context, making its isolated words the talisman to conjure with, while we profanely ignore their application! The whole field of Biblical exegesis is only too rich in error. The guide for moral conduct is to be found in the strength and unity of Scripture teaching, not in this or that precedent or text.

II. Let us be sternly on our guard against that inferential method against which Coleridge warned the Church so long ago. The general teaching of Scripture on all things necessary is plain and clear enough; and if we were not all as narrow, and as fierce, and as ignorant as we are, we might all draw water together in peace from these wells of salvation. Love, not hatred, is the key to open the difficulties of Scripture. Search the Scriptures as Christ bade you; and if you do so in the spirit of love, which is alone His spirit, you will find therein that good news of God which is the sole secret of individual salvation and of the progress, blessedness, and amelioration of the Church and of the world.

F. W. FARRAR, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, May 6th, 1880.

Chap. iii., ver. 16.—"In which are some things hard to be understood."

I. STRIFE, controversy, word-war, have gathered round the doctrine of atonement, the theory of justification, the mystery of the new birth, the everlasting sentence of God's predestination, the possibility of falling from grace, the certainty of salvation, the full assurance of faith, the eternity of punishment. In all are "many things hard to be understood." In all these there are what St. Paul calls *αἰνίγματα*—puzzles, riddles, hard sayings, paradoxes. In this searching of the Spirit into the deep things of God, as in all venturous voyages, no small peril has to be encountered. Happily for mankind, God, when He manifested Himself to the world in the person of His Son, hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. The doors of the kingdom of heaven were easiest found by those that felt most their need of entrance there, by

publicans and harlots sooner than by learned scribes or proud, contemptuous Pharisees. "Non in dialectica complacuit Deo," says old St. Ambrose, "salvum facere populum suum." "They that would do the will should know the doctrine." "The kingdom of God," cries Paul, "is not in word"—in a logically developed system—"but in power."

II. The very principle of faith, and with it, I venture to think, the only sure and permanent guarantee of holiness, is imperilled from two opposite sides: from the dogmatisers who call upon us to receive as truths propositions from which sometimes our conscience, sometimes our reason, revolts; and from the men of science who bid us, as a duty we owe to truth, give up everything that the reason cannot explain. Both parties make upon us what I cannot but consider unreasonable demands. There are mysteries in science, as well as mysteries in faith; and if philosophers are not disloyal to science by accepting a "working hypothesis," which they cannot fully prove, but which explains phenomena sufficiently well for practical purposes, neither are we disloyal to truth or false to our duty as reasonable beings for accepting as our hypothesis the principle of faith—faith which can give a reason for itself in part, though not wholly, and on which we think we can dare to work out our own salvation, albeit in fear and trembling. But the perils from the side of ultra-dogmatism are, perhaps, even greater than the perils from the oppositions of science falsely so called. Under the specious names of catholic dogma or of infallible truth, weak minds are lured to accept propositions about Divine things which, if not simply unmeaning, are utterly incredible, and which when examined are not found to rest on any authoritative or undoubted warrant of God's word, but upon the precarious or over-subtle inferences of fallible man. And when this is discovered, the inevitable law of reaction comes into operation, and those who have believed most get to believe least, and the credulity of the youth is replaced by the scepticism of the man.

III. With regard to points of faith or doctrine, it was a memorable saying of Channing's that men are responsible for the uprightness of their opinions rather than for rightness. The desire to be truthful at all hazards is a nobler temper than the mere desire to be what men call "sound." The spirit of truthfulness is what Christ tells us the Father seeks in those who worship Him.

BISHOP FRASER, *University Sermons*, p. 97.

Chap. iii., ver. 18.—"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

Divine Grace and Human Effort.

I. Whenever we have to consider any joint action of God and man, we are in danger either of thinking of God to the exclusion of man, or of man to the exclusion of God. If we think of the Bible as a Divine book, as given by the Spirit of God, we dwell upon the Divine element in it, until we almost forget that all the writers of these books were human beings like ourselves, until all the reality of the human side of the book fades away; and we forget that the love of John, and the logic of Paul, and the fervour of Peter, and the rapt, visionary mind of Isaiah, and the tender and sorrowing heart of Jeremiah—that every one of these was just as real, and is just as real, in this book, as the mind and the heart of the author are in the last book that was published and advertised yesterday. We forget the reality of the human element in the Bible while we dwell upon the Divine. And so, on the other hand, there is the danger that in attempting to make this book a real, and living, and human book to us, dwelling upon the human element, men forget the Divine, and they think and speak of these books and writings as the work of Paul, and Peter, and John, and Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and Moses, and forget that in and through all these the living and Eternal God is speaking words of eternal truth to men.

II. The word "grace" in the text gives us, of course, the idea of the Divine power. What is the idea that the word "growth" gives us? It gives us an idea of the Divine power and life, developing itself naturally and subject to natural influences. When you put a seed in the ground or plant a root in the ground, what happens? You have two things working together: you have the human hand that sets the seed and the human skill that trains and watches the seed. But in the seed what happens? Something that no man can give: you have a Divinely given life and power in that seed, and it is by virtue of that power that the seed grows up into the perfect plant, or the root into the full-grown tree. In the heart of every one of us is planted at his baptism the seed of grace, in which is the whole future life and growth of the Christian man. Just as in the acorn lies folded up the summer glory and beauty of the oak, so in the first sowing of the seed of grace in the human heart lies all the possibility of the perfect Christian life. But

this life, if left to itself, perishes. This life, like all other life, must have its food, must have its suitable soil and clime, must have its careful tending, and watering, and pruning. Neglect these, and although the life that is in it be Divine, the human sin, the human carelessness, will stunt and stamp out eventually that very life itself. There is no Divine gift in man that may not be utterly lost by man's treatment of that gift.

BISHOP MAGEE, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 531.

REFERENCES: iii. 18.—A. Raleigh, *Quiet Resting-places*, p. 145; J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 263; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 80; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 100; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 427; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 46; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 296; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 27; *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., p. 33; T. V. Tymms, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxiv., p. 45.

I. JOHN.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 27; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 331; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 108.

Chap. i., vers. 1-3.

THE Word of Life.

St. John sets forth in his writings no theory of life. He cannot, or does not, formulate his conception of it into a system; he simply feels a power, not of death, but of life, working in his own soul. He is sure there is nothing in the world or beyond the world that can destroy it. Its evident tendency *to* God attested its origin *from* God. There might be other media to other men; to him it came through Christ.

I. As a rule of life, bidding us be pure, and unselfish, and kindly affectioned; as a high ideal, stimulating us to forget the things that were behind and to reach forward unto things that were yet before; enlightening us where we saw but dimly; enabling and capacitating us where we were feeble and incompetent; purifying us where appetite and passion were in danger of blunting the finer perceptions of the heart, the nobler purposes of the soul; laying the foundations of an ampler and higher life, first for the individual and then for society and the race—it was thus that the "word of life" presented itself to the mind of St. John. If it had free course; if all who preached it practised it; if the failure of other systems to explain the phenomena of humanity, and still more to relieve its admitted ills and sorrows, were more fairly estimated and more fully known, perhaps it would be thought and seen that Christianity had not said its last word.

II. We first frustrate the grace of God, and do despite to it, trample it under our feet, and then call the Gospel a failure. We make Christian influence impossible, and then ask, Where is it to be found? We first grieve, and finally quench, the Spirit of God, and then say we can recognise no tokens of His presence or His power. And yet, under all these circumstances

of disadvantage, there are to be found in palaces and cottages pure, and brave, and noble souls; and where one such soul lives and breathes, diffusing the fragrance of its beneficent influence and the power of its saintly life, there is the proof of the truth of Christ's Gospel, there is the witness that Christ still leaves of Himself in the world. Let us beware of separating religion from morality. When St. Peter has stirred our spiritual impulses by telling us, as St. John also tells us, of the exceeding great and precious promises by which we are, as it were, made partakers of the Divine nature, he at once brings us down from heaven to earth again by saying, "And, besides all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue"; when St. Paul would pray for the best gifts for his Thessalonian converts, he prays that God would "sanctify them wholly, and that their whole spirit, soul, and body might be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

BISHOP FRASER, *University Sermons*, p. 154.

REFERENCE: i. 1-3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 158.

Chap. i., vers. 1-6.

THE Ground of Christian Ethics.

I. St. John begins with speaking of that which he saw, and heard, and handled. Those who read his letter could have no doubt that he was referring to the time when he saw the face of Jesus Christ, when he heard His discourses, when he grasped His hand, when he leaned upon His breast. There might be some still upon earth who had been in Jerusalem at that time, who had even been disciples of Christ. There would not be any of them upon the earth long. And there was none of them who would have thought he had as much right to use these expressions as the son of Zebedee had. Here, then, he claims for himself the full dignity of an Apostle.

II. St. John says that that face of His which he saw, that voice of His which he heard, those hands of His which he handled, were "about the word *of life*." A life there was within that body just as there is a life within the body of each man we converse with; but St. John says that this life which was in Him was not merely *a* life, but *the* life—the life from which all the life that is in us and in the other creatures is derived.

III. St. John introduces a parenthesis here: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness," etc. He must make the Ephesians understand that this is the beginning

and end of all he has been saying to them since he began to dwell among them. *A* life has been manifested; *the* life has been manifested. That which he saw of Christ while he was with Him upon earth was to enable him to testify of this life. He had no other business than to tell them that it had been fully revealed. But that he may perform that task properly, he must tell them what kind of life it was. It was the eternal life, not a life of years, and months, and days, and instants, but a fixed, permanent life—the life of a Being in whom is no variableness, nor the shadow of a turning. If the life is that which was manifested in Christ, in His words and acts, it is a life of gentleness, justice, truth. You cannot measure these by the clocks; you do not wish or try to measure them. And if that is the life of God, surely it is not a terrible thing, though it may be an awful thing, to recollect that He is, and was, and is to come, and that He is not far from any one of us.

IV. "That ye also may have fellowship with us." There is nothing which John claims for himself as an Apostle that he does not claim for those to whom he writes. The very highest privilege which can belong to him he affirms to be theirs. His reward is that he has the delight of announcing to them that it is theirs, and how they may enter into the enjoyment of it. Fellowship or communion with God, he is to tell them, is possible for man.

V. The proposition, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," is the proposition from which all others start. It does not only tell you of a goodness and truth without flaw—though it does tell you of these—it tells you of a goodness and truth that are always seeking to spread themselves abroad, to send forth rays that shall penetrate everywhere and scatter the darkness which opposes them.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 19.

REFERENCE: i. 2.—J. T. Stannard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 204.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—**"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."**

THE Doctrine and Fellowship of the Apostles.

I. As to the knowledge: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you"—that which we have seen and heard of the "Word of life"—"the Life" which "was manifested," that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and "was mani-

fested unto us." These names and descriptions of the Son undoubtedly refer in the first instance to His eternal relation to the Father, of whose nature He is the image, of whose will He is the expression, of whose life He is the Partner and the Communicator. But this eternal relation, what He is to the Father from everlasting, must be viewed now in connection with what He is as He dwells among us on the earth. It is "the Man Christ Jesus" who is the "manifested Life." In the midst of all the conditions of our death this life is thus manifested. For He who is the Life takes our death. Not otherwise could "that Eternal Life which was with the Father be manifested unto us."

II. So much for the communicated knowledge. The communicated fellowship comes next: "That ye may have fellowship with us." The meaning plainly is, that you may share our fellowship, which truly "is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1) The object of this fellowship is the Father and the Son—the Father and His Son Jesus Christ; not each apart, but the two, both of them, together, with whatever the Spirit of the Father and the Son may be commissioned to show, and your spirits may be enabled to take in, of the "counsel of peace" that is "between them" both; that is what is presented to you as the object of your fellowship. (2) The nature of the fellowship can be truly known only by experience. In so far as it can be described in its conditions, its practical working, and its effects, it is brought out in the whole teaching of this epistle, of which it may be said to be the theme. But a few particulars may here be indicated: (1) That it implies intelligence and insight, such intelligence and insight as the Spirit alone can give. (2) There must be faith, personal, appropriating, and assured faith, in order that the intelligence, the insight, may be quickened by a vivid sense of real personal interest and concern. (3) This fellowship is of a transforming, conforming, assimilating character. (4) It is a fellowship of sympathy. (5) The fellowship is one of joy.

R. S. CANDLISH, *Lectures on First John*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 409; J. Clements, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 218.

Chap. 1., ver. 4.—"These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

THE Joy of the Lord and its Fulness.

I. Joy, as it is commonly understood and exemplified among men, is a tumultuous feeling, a quick and lively passion or

emotion, blazing up for the most part upon some sudden prosperous surprise and apt to subside into cold indifference, if not something worse, when fortune threatens change or custom breeds familiarity. All the joy of earth partakes more or less of that character, for it is dependent upon outward circumstances, and has no deep root in itself. Even what must in a sense be called spiritual joy may be of that sort. Such joy is like "the goodness which, as a morning cloud and as the early dew, goeth away." It is Christ's joy that is fulfilled in him who is truly and heartily the "Bridegroom's friend." Christ's twofold joy: (1) His joy as the Bridegroom possessing the bride and (2) His joy as the Son possessing the Father.

II. This joy, "His joy," is to become ours; it is to "remain in us." "Our joy is to be full" by "His joy being fulfilled in us." Let us notice first the reality and then the fulness of this fellowship or partnership of joy between Christ and us. Christ would have His joy to be really ours. First, in His standing with the Father He calls us to share, and, secondly, He makes us partakers of, the very same inward evidence of acceptance and sonship as He Himself had when He was on earth; and, thirdly, we have the same commission with Christ, the same trust reposed in us, the same work assigned to us. The chiefest element of Christ's joy is that He is "meek and lowly in heart"; and therefore "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light"—so easy, so light, that we may count it joy to bear them. We must share that meekness of His, that lowliness of heart; we, like Him, must be emptied of self, for no true joy is or can be selfish.

III. The reality of this joy, Christ's own joy remaining in us, may now be partly apparent. But who shall venture to describe its fulness? "That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Misery ends and fulness of joy comes when we think, and feel, and wish as God does. Therefore fulness of joy may be ours, ours more and more, when "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," this glory of His being the Father's willing Servant and loyal Son, "we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

R. S. CANDLISH, *Lectures on First John*, p. 18.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"God is light."

I. A PART of the teaching of the words, "God is light," is to show that we cannot see God. You cannot see "light." You

see things by the light. You may in a certain sense see "light" reflected; but you cannot see "light." Its very lustre prevents you looking at it; by its nature it protects itself from human vision and makes itself invisible. It is possible it may be a mere piece of poetry or fancy, but it may be a fact, that all the "light" which shines on this earth is a reflection from the actual person of God. It comes from the sun to us; but we all know now that the sun is only a reflector. But whence does it come to the sun? may not it be from the person of the great Creator and Fountain of all things? It is conceivable, and the conception is grand. But you will do well to make a distinction. God the Father is "light." He is not "the Light of the world." "I," Christ says—"I am the Light of the world." And the reason is plain. God is in Himself "I AM"—"I am what I am": light unapproachable. But all that man can see of it, Christ is, and Christ shows. The communication of it to the universe is Jesus Christ.

II. Look at some of the practical results which lie in the thought that "God is light." How do we see anything? By "light." "Light" touches the object, and then the "light" which has touched the object touches us. It makes a picture on the eye, and so we see it. How can we see a truth? How can we see all truth? How can we see God, where all truth is? Christ came from God; the Holy Ghost comes from Christ; the Holy Ghost touches a man's mind, enters into a man's mind, makes an impression upon a man's mind. By that path, coming down from God, that mind, touched by the Holy Ghost, sees Christ; through Christ he sees God. "God is light." The ray emanates from God, passes into Christ, travels to us by the Spirit, carries us back through Christ to the Father, from whom it sprang; and so, and only so, we know God "Light" is a very penetrating, searching thing. Do you wish "light" to come into your soul? That entrance will disclose strange things, the hidden wickednesses and weaknesses that are in your heart, just as the sunlight coming into a dark chamber shows all the dust and the dirt, which lay as thick before, but till then unrevealed. Again and again in God's word "light" is joy, and our "God is light." Then our God is a happy God. Then we are happiest when we are most like God. Keep near Him, and you will walk in sunshine. The heart where He is will always carry its own inner radiance; and glad thoughts and sweet smiles will by their beautiful reflections be the best preachers, and tell to the whole world that

"God is light." Things at this moment may be dark about you in the world, and darker still when you look down into your own heart. Think of this. Go up and down in God. It is all "light" there. It is a wonderful triumph of scientific power by which man has learnt to paint by the sun, and by a process of simple nature every object can cast its image only by "light." But what is all photography but a shadow of the still higher truth that there are passings and repassings between a soul and God by which God casts His own image? and if only we look, "we shall be like Him," here and in eternity, just in proportion as we "see Him as He is."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 173.

REFERENCES: i. 5.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 27; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 31.

Chap. i., vers. 5-7.

I. THE form of the announcement in the fifth verse is very peculiar: "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you." It is not a discovery which we make concerning God. It is an authentic and authoritative communication to us from Himself. The message is twofold. First, positively, "God is light"; next, negatively, "in Him is no darkness at all." (1) Positively, "God is light." Light is clear, transparent, translucent, patent, and open, always and everywhere, as far as its influence extends. It comes in contact with all things; it is itself affected by nothing. Thus "God is light," in His character perfectly open and perfectly inviolable. (2) Negatively, "in Him is no darkness." The light shineth in darkness, and "in Him is no darkness at all."

II. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." The thing itself is impossible, for light hath no fellowship with darkness.

III. From the solemn message in the fifth verse and the faithful warning in the sixth the gracious assurance in the seventh fitly follows: "We have fellowship one with another," God with us and we with Him. It is our joint fellowship with God, and His with us, that alone is to the purpose here.

R. S. CANDLISH, *Lectures on First John*, p. 37.

REFERENCE: i. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 328.

Chap. i., vers. 6-10.

LIGHT and Darkness: Sin and Purification.

I. The expressions, "light" and "darkness," were wonder-

fully suitable for those to whom St. John wrote. The Ephesians had paid a special worship to Artemis or Diana. They connected her with the moon, the night ruler. They had paid a worship, in common with the other Greeks, to Apollo; him they connected with the sun that rules the day. They connected them, I say, with these beautiful objects; but they were never satisfied with doing so. They worshipped the visible things from which they thought that the light proceeded. All the time they felt that men were better than these things; therefore, if they worshipped these things, they must also worship men. St. John had believed that God had revealed Himself, not in the sun or in the moon, but in a humble and crucified Man. With this conviction becoming every hour deeper and deeper in his mind, he had settled in the city where Apollo and Diana were worshipped. But he did not think that the Ephesians had been wrong when they dreamt of a God of light. That was a true dream; Christ had come to fulfil it. That light which belongs especially to man, that light by which he is to guide his steps, that light which keeps men in fellowship with each other, that was His own true light, His own proper nature; that was what God had manifested to men in His Son.

II. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." The darkness of which St. John speaks is an utterly unsocial condition. A man thinks about himself, dwells in himself; the rest of the universe lies in shadow. It is not that he has not continual transactions with other people; it is not that they do not supply him with things that he wants; it is not that he could dispense with them. But all they do is only contemplated in reference to himself; they work, and suffer, and think for him. Our selfishness is too strong for all, however bright, in earth, and sea, and air to overcome. It is not too strong for God to overcome. We may walk day by day as if we were in His presence, as if He were looking at us and guiding us, and guiding all our brethren and all this universe. And then we have fellowship one with another. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, wherever we are, in lonely rooms or in crowded streets, we may have fellowship with each other; we may see each other, not as reflections of ourselves, but as images of Him.

III. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Instead of the fancy that we are

without sin being a proof how clearly the light is shining into us, it is a proof that we are shutting out the light, for that would reveal to us our own inclination to flee from it and choose the darkness. God's faithfulness and justice are the enemies of our sins; therefore to them we may turn from our sins. They are the refuges from the darkness that is in us. He forgives us that He may cleanse us. The forgiveness is itself a part of the cleansing. He manifests His righteousness to us that we may trust Him. By trusting Him we are delivered from the suspicion which is the very essence of sin.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 34.

REFERENCES: i. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 663; vol. iv., No. 223; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, pp. 206, 246; *Homilist*, 4th series, vol. i., p. 181; W. J. Woods, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 194; R. W. Dale, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 184; J. Edmunds, *Fifteen Sermons*, p. 80.

Chap. i., ver. 8.—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."

I. THE Apostle declares that the imagination of our sinlessness is an inward lie. The particular causes of this delusion will vary with every variety of individual character. Every temptation that occupies, and by occupying excludes all other occupants, may claim its share in the perpetuation of this melancholy illusion. The whole host of Satan are engaged to drug this opiate. All their enchantments are accessory to this, and result in this. It would be vain, therefore, to think of specifying the particular causes of this evil; we can only speak of some of the general principles on which it rests.

II. (1) The first and darkest of Satan's works on earth is also the first and deepest fountain of the misfortune we are now lamenting—the original and inherited corruption of the human soul itself. It is ignorant of sin, just because it is naturally sinful. There is a sense in which it may be said that the heart knoweth *not* its own bitterness. One chief object of the Gospel history, as applied by the Spirit of God, is to humble and yet animate us by a portraiture of moral excellence which, as observation cannot furnish, so assuredly nature will never spontaneously imagine. We cannot know our degradation, we cannot struggle, or even wish to rise, if we have never been led to conceive the possibility of a state higher than our own. (2) So far, then, it appears that Nature, herself prone to sin, may be expected, in virtue of that very tendency, to tell us we have no sin, and that therefore her evidence is to

be received with suspicion; but it must next be remembered that, properly speaking, no human being can be seen in this state of nature alone. Man is far advanced upon his way before his steps are arrested. Repeated acts are become principles of action, and every man is the creature of his own past life. If Nature alone, treacherous and degraded Nature, is silent in denouncing sin, if she has no instinctive power to arouse herself, what shall she be when doubly and trebly indurated by habit? (3) No man arrests that evil in himself which his eyes have never ceased to contemplate in others. Even follies that at first are odious lose their oppressiveness when we are surrounded with nothing else, as the enormous weight of the air becomes imperceptible from its pressure being universal. (4) How the power of this universality of sin around us to paralyse the sensibility of conscience is augmented by the influence of fashion and rank, I need not assert. "Who can understand his errors?" Let us urge the humble petition of the Psalmist, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

W. ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 140.

REFERENCE: i. 8.—W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 344.

Chap. i., vers. 8, 9.

DIVINE Justice and Pardon Reconciled.

There are two extreme tendencies in human sentiment respecting God from which a devout and thoughtful heart shrinks with equal repugnance: a religion which begins with fear and a religion which ends without it. On the one hand is the passionate faith of remorse, which throws the shade of its own despair upon the universe of God, lies prostrate in the dark cell of alienation, and declares that if no mediator interpose, there is no hope or respite from the curse of inexorable law; on the other is the creed of lenient good-nature, which spreads the light of its mild indifference over all things, considers the sins of men as chiefly venial frailties, is pleased with its own tolerance, and trusts that Heaven will overlook what it must have foreseen and did not think it worth while to prevent.

I. It is a hard thing for our narrow mind to take in the infinite harmony of Divine perfection. Our conscience and our affections make incompatible demands on God. We require for our support that He be faithful; we look for our comfort's sake that He be tender too. If compassion be impossible to God, it is strange that He has implanted any in us; for He

has more reason to pity us, than we can have to pity one another, we gazing in the face of an equal and a brother, He looking from His serene almightiness down upon our nature, tempted, sorrowing, struggling, dying. No, it is as much a part of perfection to receive the penitent as to reprove the sin, unless the noblest impulse of the human soul seeks vainly for its image and prototype in Him.

II. But how, you will ask, can both these things be? How can God at once swerve no hairbreadth from His threatened punishment, and yet be ever ready to forgive? Rightly to understand this, we must mark the distinction between His interior nature and His external government, between what He is in Himself and what He has written out and proclaimed in the legislation of the universe. Not all that dwells in His thought and lives in His heart has He put forth; and, vast as is the field and sublime the record of creation, solemn as we find the path of life, and awful the insight of His conscience, these are but a part of His ways; and there is yet a hiding-place of His thunder that none can understand. Everything to Him is infinite, and all the splendours of His revelation in the old earth and in the older sky, and on the heart of humanity, and even in the unique life of the Man of sorrows, are but a few faint lines of light, streaking the surface of immensity. Within the realm of law and nature He is inexorable, and has put the freedom of pity quite away; and as the Atlantic storm turns not aside to avoid the ship where sanctity or genius is afloat, so neither does the tempest of justice falter and pause to spare the head uplifted in repentant prayer. But it is otherwise in respect to the soul and person of the sinner himself: the sentiments of God towards him are not bound; and if, while the deed of the past is an irrevocable transgression, the temper of the present is one of surrender and return, there is nothing to sustain the Divine aversion or hinder the outflow of infinite pity.

J. MARTINEAU, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 102.

Chap. i., vers. 8-10.

I. "IF we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is not deliberate falseness that we are here warned against, but a far more subtle form of falsehood, and one more apt easily to beset us as believers even when most seriously and earnestly bent on "walking in the light, as God is in the light." I am not conscious of anything

very far amiss in my spiritual experience or in my practical behaviour. I begin to "say that I have no sin," but I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me. "Guile" is taking the place of "truth"; and I am very apt to lose a precious privilege, the privilege of continual and constant confession in order to continual and constant forgiveness.

II. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is true—true to Himself and true to us. "He is faithful and just in forgiving our sins."

III. If, in the face of such a faithful manner of forgiveness on the part of God, we continue to shrink from that open dealing and guileless confession which our "walking in the light, as God is in the light," implies, we not only wrong ourselves and do violence to our own consciousness and our own conscience, but, "saying that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

R. S. CANDLISH, *Lectures on First John*, p. 52.

REFERENCES: i. 8-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1241. i. 9.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., No. 255; J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 93; R Glover, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 88. i. 16.—A. Rowland, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 203.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—"Jesus Christ the righteous."

I. ADMIT the fact that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," and then we can at once understand why when His ministry commenced the heavens were opened and the powers of hell disturbed. Admit that, when the Lord Jesus was going about doing good upon earth, the fulness of the Godhead was dwelling in Him bodily, and we can at once appreciate His assumption of all the moral and potential attributes of the Deity. Admit that the Lord Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, and instead of being surprised that, when He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross, the sun should be darkened, and the rocks be rent, and the earth shaken, we shall rather marvel that all nature did not crumble into nothingness.

II. But yet further, if God were indeed incarnate when the Lord Jesus was born, we can understand why all nature was moved; but still we have only partially investigated the subject. How improbable is it that God should become incarnate only to do what mere man might accomplish; only to act as a Teacher,

as a Preacher of the resurrection of the dead. No, He came to counteract and remedy the injury inflicted by the malignant powers of darkness; He came to bruise the serpent's heel; He came as a Deliverer. As such He was foreshadowed in the sacrificial rites, as such foretold by the prophets.

III. Here, then, was an object worthy of His coming, worthy of the coming of Him who is the Second Person of the blessed Godhead, whose most glorious attribute is love. He came with the intent that now, not merely to this world and its inhabitants, but unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God; He came that by His death we might be reconciled to God and have redemption through His blood; He came to shed His blood for the remission of sins.

W. F. HOOK, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, p. 307.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father."

I. LET that be your aim: to "sin not." Let it be deliberately set before you as your fixed and settled purpose that you are not to sin, not merely that you are to sin as little as you can, but that you are not to sin at all.

II. But not only would I have you to make this your aim: I would have your aim accomplished and realised. And therefore I write these things unto you, that ye sin not. We must assume it to be possible not to sin when we walk in the open fellowship of God. We are brought into a position in relation to God in which holiness is no longer a desperate negative strife, but a blessed positive achievement.

III. Why, then, it may be asked, is provision made for our sinning still after all? "If any man"—any of us—"sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Thus our Lord Jesus Christ cheers us on; He assures us that He is near us if we should stumble. There is the Intercessor ever pleading for us: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father."

R. S. CANDLISH, *Lectures on First John*, p. 67.

REFERENCES: ii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 515; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 280; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 340; *Homilist*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 407.

Chap. ii., vers. 1, 2.

CHRIST our Righteousness.

This short, pregnant passage stands in one of the inner sanctuaries of the Bible. This first epistle of St. John is very possibly

the latest page of Scripture in date. Assuredly in it the Holy Spirit takes the reader into the last recesses of spiritual life and experience; He leads him into the most penetrating and searching views of holiness, and obedience, and love. A tone and air of serene yet awful purity, at once most spiritual and most importunately practical, characterises the pages. The Christian contemplated in this letter is a man of God indeed; he has fellowship with the Father and the Son.

I. All the more remarkable it is, then, that in such a passage comes the language of the text. For one thing, we are here warned that the heights and depths of grace leave the liability to actual sinning there still. This blessed believer, this privileged and transfigured man, may very conceivably sin, so says St. John. "He is the propitiation for our sins." Here are the basis of the advocacy; the strength of the plea; the reason of the sinning believer's non-exclusion. The pacification of offended holiness, the reconcilement of the Father-Judge in His awful consciousness and cognisance of His regenerate child's slightest sin, lies altogether here, not in effusion of love, but in propitiation, not in presence of spiritual life, but in propitiation.

II. From the text we see the union of Christ and His people, the union of Christ and the believing soul. Our Advocate, our propitiation, is also our Elder Brother, our celestial Bridegroom, our vital root, our living and life-giving Head. In Him we "possess His possessions" won for us. Amongst them we possess His dear-bought merit, good for us from first to last of our need. That merit is lodged evermore in Him, and we are one with Him.

H. C. G. MOULE, *Christ is All*, p. 3.

CONSIDER—I. The nature of the office which Christ as our Advocate sustains. (1) It would seem to be necessary for various reasons that there should be this Mediator between God and man. The pagan people, in the absence of revelation, invested their departed heroes with intermediate powers, and constituted them in some sort intercessors with the offended gods. In the dim twilight of the shepherd-age, Job speaks as the representative of thousands when he breathes out his complaint, "Neither is there any daysman between us, who can lay his hand upon us both." This want was supplied in the case of the Jews by the sumptuous furniture of their economy. It had been strange if in a more glorious economy, the last and the utmost of the dispensations of God, man had been left to his own vague conceptions of the unseen object

of his worship; but God has sent His Son into the world, and all men now may see the fellowship of the mystery. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. (2) This office of advocacy is essential to the completeness of the priestly office. Other priests become infirm with age, sicken in disease, and die; "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

II. In every point of view or conception, Jesus Christ the righteous is our perfect Advocate, throughly furnished for every good word and work; and it is a matter of difficulty to select those aspects of His qualification which will most warmly commend Him to our regard. We observe—(1) He is a sympathising Advocate; (2) He is a prevalent Advocate; (3) He is a continual Advocate; (4) He is the exclusive Advocate. He was the only Redeemer, and by consequence He is the only Intercessor. "He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none" to help Him; and only He is authorised to appear for us in the presence of God. To associate others with Him in the work of advocacy is to cast a reflection either upon His ability or willingness to save.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 236.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-3.

THE True Idea of Man.

I. St. John had a special reason for using this tender phrase, "my little children," in this place. All sin is connected by the Apostle with the loss of fellowship. A man shuts himself up in himself. He denies that he has anything to do with God; he denies that he has anything to do with his brother. That is what he calls walking in darkness. The inclination to walk in darkness, to choose darkness rather than light, is sin. We become aware of this inclination; then arises in our minds a terrible sense of shame for having yielded to it, and for having it so near us. But as soon as we believe that God is light, and that in Him is no darkness at all, as soon as we understand that He has manifested His light to us that we may see it and may show it forth—with this sense of shame there comes also the pledge of deliverance. We are not bound by that sin to which we have surrendered ourselves in time past, or which is haunting us now; we are not created to be its servants. We may turn to the light; we may claim our portion in it; we may ask that it may penetrate us. And then, the Apostle says, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ, of Him in whom is life eternal,

of Him who has taken the flesh and blood of men and has poured out His blood for all—that cleanses us from sin. We renounce our selfish life; we claim His life, which belongs to our brother just as much as to ourselves.

II. "He is the propitiation for our sins." These Jewish offerings, then, were no compensations to an offended Prince; they were indications and expressions of the will of a gracious Ruler; they were acts of submission on the part of the Israelite to that Ruler; they were witnesses of a union between Him and them which could not be broken. And there was in that tabernacle in which those sacrifices were offered a mercy-seat, where God declared that He would meet the worshippers. What had become of the sacrifices, and the priests, and the mercy-seat? St. John says Jesus Christ the righteous, our Advocate, is the mercy-seat. In Him God meets us; in Him we may meet God. The Jewish sacrifice, high-priest, and mercy-seat were gone. Was this, then, a Jewish High-priest, sacrifice, mercy-seat? If He were that (and He was that), He must be more. The Lord had taken the nature of man; He had died the death of man. Was He not then a High-priest, a sacrifice, a mercy-seat for man? Could St. John dare to say, He is a mercy-seat for our sins only? Must he not say, He also accomplishes what the Gentiles have been dreaming of in their miserable propitiations? He is the mercy-seat for the whole world; the world is reconciled in Him. All have a right to draw nigh to God as their Father in Him; all have a right to cast away the fetters by which they were bound, seeing that He has triumphed over sin, and death, and the grave, seeing that He is at the right hand of God. Therefore we have a right to say our race, our manhood, is glorified in Him; there is a common Lord of us all. Confessing that common Lord, renouncing, by the strength of this common life, our selfish, divided life, we become men indeed; we obtain the rights, the stature, the freedom, the dignity, of men.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 53.

Chap. ii., ver. 2.—"And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

I. THE Christian world here presents to us opposite extremes of opinion, as well as diversities. If we except, on the one hand, those who put a limitation on the intrinsic value of the Re-

deemer's sacrifice, who, by a kind of arithmetical process, estimate the worth of atonement by the number of those whom it actually saves, and, on the other hand, those who infer universal salvation as a necessary consequence from the atonement of Jesus Christ, the remaining discrepancies are rather the result of misapprehension than of any opposition of view. The man who looks at the sacrifice of Christ in view of some secret purpose of God and of the actual results which shall flow from it becomes the stern and unflinching advocate of limited atonement, and seems to be directly at war with another who, looking at the intrinsic nature of the sacrifice of Christ and its adaptation to other, and larger, and more general results, becomes the no less stern and unflinching advocate of unlimited atonement.

II. All the laws by which God governs the different systems are general in their character; all His arrangements for our world are made upon general principles. The light of the sun is enough for all; the rains of heaven are enough for all. And if a man does not see the light, the reason is in himself, and not in the sun.

III. We cannot fail to be struck with the character of universality which marks the terms in which the Bible speaks of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all." I confess I do not understand the Gospel if this is not one of its cardinal doctrines, if the indiscriminate offer of Jesus Christ, and of pardon and eternal life through Him, is not made to the race, and as truly, and honestly, and sincerely made to one individual as to another of the race.

E. MASON, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 271.

REFERENCES: ii. 2.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vii., p. 255; R. W. Dale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 313.

Chap. ii., ver. 3.—"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

SAVING Knowledge.

I. The whole duty and work of a Christian is made up of these two parts: faith and obedience; "looking unto Jesus," the Divine object as well as Author of our faith, and acting according to His will. Not as if a certain frame of mind, certain notions, affections, feelings, and tempers, were not a necessary condition of a saving state; but so it is. The Apostle does not insist as if it were sure to follow if our hearts do but grow into these two chief objects: the view of God in Christ and the diligent aim to obey Him in our conduct. St.

John speaks of knowing Christ and of keeping His commandments as the two great departments of religious duty and blessedness. To know Christ is to discern the Father of all as manifested through His only-begotten Son incarnate. Turning from Him to ourselves, we find a short rule given us: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." This is all that is put upon us, difficult indeed to perform, but easy to understand, all that is put upon us, and for this plain reason: that Christ has done everything else. He has freely chosen us, died for us, regenerated us, and now ever liveth in us; and what remains? Simply that we should do as He has done to us, showing forth His glory by good works.

II. Our duty lies in acts; it does not lie directly in moods or feelings. The office of self-examination lies rather in detecting what is bad in us than in ascertaining what is good. No harm can follow from contemplating our sins, so that we keep Christ before us and attempt to overcome them; such a review of self will but lead to repentance and faith. And while it does this, it will undoubtedly be moulding our hearts into a higher and more heavenly state, but still indirectly, just as the mean is attained in action or art, not by directly contemplating and aiming at it, but negatively, by avoiding extremes.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 151.

THE Moral Teaching of St. John.

I. It is conduct about which the Apostle John is anxious, quite as anxious as St. James, although he exhibits far more fully than St. James its dependence on right faith in Christ, as truly Divine, as cleansing and saving us through His blood. It is conduct, as distinct from mere talking or from pleasing suppositions as to one's own goodness, on which the Epistle insists; for St. John is intolerant of shams, as becomes the disciple who was loved by Him who was the Truth. He has been called a mystic; but there is nothing dreamy or indefinite in his teaching about duty: it is very plain-spoken, even sternly direct, uncompromisingly practical. And Christian practice with him is found to circle around the two ideas of light and of truth.

II. This is true whether we consider what concerns our own souls practically or what belongs to our relations to each other. Under the former head—(1) St. John would have us think of Christian conduct as exhibiting the two aspects of obedience and of purity. Take obedience first. He that doeth sin, whose daily life drifts ordinarily into sin, whose life is characterised by

wilful sinning, is also thereby doing lawlessness. And purity is but another aspect of the same moral condition. (2) But the same principle will work itself out in love to our brethren. In proportion as we realise Christ's presence and His claims, we appreciate more practically the bonds which unite us to those who are treading the same path, who, with us, have been made His children. We walk in darkness, we are liars, not only when we are impure or disobedient, but also when we are uncharitable.

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: ii. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 922; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 292.

Chap. ii., vers. 3-7.

DOING and Knowing.

I. St. John assumes that the knowledge of God is as possible, is as real, for human beings as any knowledge they can have of each other. Nay, he goes further than this. There are impediments to our knowledge of each other which he says do not exist with reference to that higher knowledge. We may know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. I sometimes suspect that we give too loose a sense to that word "keep." No doubt it means to "obey." It does not mean more than that; for obedience is very comprehensive, a little too comprehensive for slow and narrow creatures such as we are. The word "keep," if we consider it, may help us to know what obedience is and what it is not. A friend gives me a token to keep for him; he wishes that it should remind me of him, that it should recall days which we have spent together. Perhaps it may be only a flower or a weed that was gathered in a certain place where we were walking or botanising; perhaps it is something precious in itself. If, instead of giving me anything, he enjoins me to do a certain act or not to do a certain act, I may be said as truly to keep that injunction as to keep the flower. To fulfil it is to remember him; it is a token of my fellowship with him, of my relation with him.

II. St. John began with this revelation of God to men in His Son. It was the ground of all his teaching. He had told the Ephesians already that there was that darkness, that covetousness, in them which St. Paul had found in himself, which had caused him so much horror. But he had told them also, as St. Paul had told them, that they were not created to walk in this darkness; that they might walk in the light which Christ had revealed, and have fellowship with it. So now, taking this for

granted, he could tell them that these commandments might be kept as the commandments of a God who was at one with them in His Son, and that the more they kept them the more they would know of Him. Many in that time said, "We know God; but what are the commandments, what is common earthly morality, to us?" "I tell you," says St. John broadly and simply, "that if they are nothing to you, God is nothing to you." You may use what fine language you will; you may have what fine speculations you like; but it is in practice, in that daily practice of life, in the struggle with the temptations to cheat and slander, to be unchaste and to be covetous, which beset us all in different ways and forms, it is in revering parents and the name of God, it is in heeding God's rest and God's work, it is in keeping ourselves from idols, it is in worshipping Him as the common Deliverer, that we come to know Him—thus, and only thus.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 69.

REFERENCES: ii. 5.—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiv., p. 217. ii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1732. ii. 7-11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 234.

Chap. ii., ver. 8.—"Again, a new commandment."

A NEW Commandment.

I. I will try to show you that this commandment is old, and yet new. But we may as well see, first of all, what the commandment is. John does not quite say in the text what it is; but he does tell us elsewhere. He says in another letter, writing to a Christian friend, "The new commandment which is from the beginning is that we love one another." And in the night when Christ was betrayed, as our reading lesson in the New Testament has shown us, Christ said the very same thing: "A new commandment give I unto you: Love one another, as I have loved you." Then that is the commandment that is both old and new: "to love one another." Christ says it, and John says it; so that you are quite sure about it. Now, there is an old story told about John which I think I should tell you here. It was said that when he was very old he was not able to go to church, that he could not walk there, although the distance was not very great, and he used to get them to carry him upon his couch or litter—a little bed which they could move into the place. He was so feeble that he could not even sit up and speak to the people, and he just lifted up his hands when he was lying upon his couch, and said, "Little children, love one another."

II. Now, the commandment, as I have said, is old and new. It is very old. Not only did Christ give it to His disciples from the time He was going away to leave them, from the beginning of the Gospel ages, but He had given it long, long before. For in substance you will find this commandment in the Old Testament. Nay, it is even older than the Old Testament. When God made Adam and Eve and put them into the garden, that is what He said: "Love each other." But whilst this commandment is old, I have now to show you why it might be called new: because there are new circumstances that make it come with a new force and meaning. And I would put it to you in these two ways. In the first place, it is written with a new hand; and, secondly, it is read in a new light. The new hand that writes and the new light that shines make the commandment new. First, it is written by a new hand. The old commandment was written, as you know, by God at Sinai; but it is a real human hand that we get this commandment from now. I do not mean to say that Christ wrote it and gave it to His disciples in a written form. But the command was new because it was read in a new light. Now, speaking generally, the new light in which we read it is Gospel light. That is exactly what John says in this verse. He says, "A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you" (He is new in giving it, and you are new in getting it), "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." So that you read this commandment in a new light, because you read it in the light of the Gospel. Reading the commandment in the old light and reading it in the light that falls from Christ's love is like the difference between reading it beside a glimmering lamp and reading it in the summer sunshine, warm, and golden, and strong. When Christ said to His disciples, "Love one another," you remember He put the commandment in that very light of His own love.

J. EDMOND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 152.

Chap. ii., ver. 8.—"The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

DARKNESS and Light.

I. How difficult it is in health to recollect how we felt in sickness, how difficult to remember pain when the whole body is at ease. The world is full of such strange secrets of life and feeling; the same persons cannot recall their former selves very often, so different are they at one time from what they were at

another. Much more is it not possible to live the lives of others, to feel their feelings, to enter into the unknown lands of hearts that are not our own. How then shall we, living in daylight, realise what it was to live when the world was dark? How can we go back in spirit to a time we have never known, and catch something of the glad surprise with which the first watchers welcomed the light of Christ? A little we know from the darkness of our own hearts being cleared away, but this is of ourselves alone. We have not seen the light of Christ first rising in its glory and its gladness on the darkness of a world that was dark. Darkness was on life; darkness was on death: darkness was the only certainty.

II. And then came light, light into the living grave, the Son of God moving upon earth, breaking through with words of power outward sorrow, disease, and death. O Christ, the noble army of martyrs praised Thee; the holy Church throughout all the world did acknowledge Thee. The high places of earth caught the light; pinnacle after pinnacle, city on city, flashed with Divine fire. Africa, Egypt, Cyrene, Alexandria, and all the old giant powers of early time passed into brighter day. Imperial Rome, with all its glorious charnel-houses, was smitten with the heavenly ray; the farthest West saw the great light, a light and a life that needed the deeds of those who still loved darkness to show its exceeding power. "Unto us a Child was born; unto us a Son was given." The first Christmas is our earthly life beginning, the second our heavenly, both seasons of joy unspeakable to those who love light.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 24.

REFERENCES: ii. 8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 350. ii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1711; W. Harris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 336.

Chap. ii., vers. 12-14.

THE Children; the Youths; the Old Men.

I. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. Many interpreters are careful to tell us that the Apostle does not mean actual children, but only children in faith and knowledge, young converts. I do not think the distinction is necessary. To both the same language was suitable. Trust is the great necessity of a child. St. John tells us that the first lesson of all to be learnt concerning God is that He remits or sends away sins, for that is the force of the word. He would have all Christian

children know this; he would tell it to the heathen, who had been dreaming of gods altogether different, gods that had no delight in remitting sins at all.

II. Why does St. John pass at once from these children to those who appear farthest from them?—"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." I do not think that aged men are those who are least able to sympathise with children, or who most discard the love of children. I think that the sight of the human as well as the natural spring is a special delight to those who are feeling the winter, frosty but kindly. St. John may have felt something of this himself. There seems to me a great beauty in his way of connecting the child's belief in forgiveness with the aged man's knowledge of Him who was in the beginning, as if each lay beneath the other and as if the experience of each new year had been drawing it forth.

III. And now he comes to a class which we know better than either of these, though perhaps it may not have the same charm for us: "I write unto you, young men." St. John could say to these young men in the midst of all the toil and war of the world, "Ye have overcome the evil one." Treat him as one that is overcome. Refuse him homage, and he will flee from you. All young men of this day, all that are struggling against their own enemies and God's, have a right to this same confidence. It is only dangerous when it becomes confidence in themselves.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 101.

I. ST. JOHN means his epistle, or, as it is rather, his pastoral address, for all alike. He has no separate teaching for separate ages, but he wishes all to listen to him; and so in addressing them he distinguishes them, as you have heard: "I write unto you, little children," "to you, fathers," "to you, young men." And he assigns to each a reason—a reason why he should write, and be sure that they would listen—in a beautiful trait and characteristic of each several age. He repeats these twice, as he repeats the address twice. He does this as we repeat a name twice, lingering over it fondly or wishing to put special gravity and earnestness into an entreaty. The reasons are varied slightly, as are even the addresses themselves, the second adding some touch or different side to the first. Notice what they are. The first gives two characteristics of Christian childhood: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins

are forgiven you for His name's sake. . . . I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." What are these characteristics? First, innocence, not the innocence of a spotless nature, but the innocence of a pardoned child, fresh from the font of forgiveness; secondly, the child's knowledge of God, again, not inborn knowledge, but yet a knowledge to which, when it is given to it, the pure and simple heart makes immediate response. Next comes in both cases Christian old age: "I write unto you, fathers"—with this the reason given is one and the same in the two addresses—"because ye have known Him that was from the beginning." The characteristic of Christian age is, should be, is ideally, completeness of Christian knowledge, a knowledge complete and satisfying of Jesus Christ, of Him as the soul of life, in whose hands are all things.

II. The last address is to the age which comes between: "I have written unto you, young men." Why do they come out of their order? Possibly, probably, because of the three classes they are the one to whom St. John's heart goes out most in sympathy, yearning, hope. They are those who even more than the others are in his immediate thoughts; they are those to whom he has need to give the warning which immediately follows: "Love not the world, nor the things of the world"; they are those on whose brave hearts he most trusts for the triumph for which he looks: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." For the characteristic of Christian manhood is strength. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong," a strength not their own, but coming from the presence of Christ's Spirit, of Christ Himself, within them—"because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Such, then, is the picture of Christian life which St. John draws from the innocence and clear-eyed faith of childhood, through the conflicts, strength, and victories of manhood, to the faith, not less clear, but resting now on experience, of a calm old age. It is an ideal picture, but it is one true in its measure of any Christian life. He does not set it before his children as one they may gaze at from afar, but not dream of realising; he assumes it to be real, to be true, of them; he makes it the very ground of his appeals to them: "I have written unto you because," not in the hope that you may become, but "because you are." Could he have said the same of us with the happy confidence that all in a degree answered to his description?

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 224.

THE Age of Nature and the Age of Grace.

I. St. John divides the readers of his epistle into three great classes. Does he speak of childhood, of youth, of old age, as each having upon it a special mark of condition or attainment in the life of grace? It is quite possible that in those days of trial and persecution for the truth's sake there may have been a much closer approximation than we now dream of within the Christian community between the natural age and the spiritual. By the time when St. John wrote, there must have been a large infusion into the Church of the family element of human life. Converts from Judaism, converts from idolatry, made so by one of those violent wrenches and convulsions of the moral being which are described to us in the Acts and in the earlier epistles, must now for thirty or forty or fifty years past have settled down into regular worshippers, regular communicants, with children around them brought up from infancy in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, now forming in their turn the hope and the strength of a rising and a risen generation, never having known what it was to relapse into a practical ungodliness from which there could be no other awakening than that of a second conversion and a second regeneration. In large part, in a proportion so large as not to be an exception to the rule, the children of Christian parents were in those days Christian children, and the young men of Christian homes were in those days consistent, Christian young men. Can we now say that every child is in all probability a child indeed in grace, as St. John here describes that condition, and that each step in human life has been marked in the individual members of our congregations by a corresponding step in grace and Christian knowledge? The Church has lost sadly the love of her espousals. When shall she reach the second love of the presentation and the marriage? This is the first lesson of the text.

II. And the second lesson is not to acquiesce in this divorce in the Christian community between the nominal and the spiritual. Let the spirit of our Church's baptism be carried into the nursery, into the schoolroom, into the family circle. Let there be no sitting still and holding the hands and counting the days until, by some separate, some uncovenanted surprise of grace, it shall please God to bring out of the darkness that soul which already He has inserted in the holy temple of Christ's body. Bring him up from the first as a child of God, as a member of Christ, as an heir of the kingdom. Treat the child

as a Christian child; treat the young man within your doors as a Christian young man. Suppose of each, and expect in each, and encourage in each, that spirit, that language, that conduct, which has Christ for a pattern. When they are fallen, restore them; when they faint, revive them; when they sin, heal them, under God, as in Christ, as His redeemed, His accepted, His chosen; and, be assured, the blessing of an almighty Lord will attend the effort.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 623.

REFERENCES: ii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1711; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 106; A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 116; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 210. ii. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., Nos. 1715, 1751. ii. 14.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiv, No. 811; J. Thain Davidson, *Sure to Succeed*, p. 265; R. Balgarnie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 204.

Chap. ii., ver. 15.—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

I. THE world is nature's heaven. It is a carnal copy of a spiritual joy. It is a figment which he who is the prince of it sets up, whereby, indulging our senses, or pleasing our imaginations, or gratifying our vanity, he makes us rest in happiness which imitates heaven, but is not heaven, because it wants the essence of heaven—it has not God.

II. Observe that that which is forbidden us is not going into the world, but the love of it. It is a very easy thing for a person used to the restraint of a religious education, or from a regard to the opinion of those whom he respects, never to enter into the world's dissipation, but yet all the while to come to the full under the condemnation of the text because he loves it and cherishes it in his heart. He has a world within. On the other hand, a man, from his necessary employment or a sense of duty, may go into many a worldly scene; he may appear to others a man of the world; but all the while his tastes and desires are away from it; his affections are above; the world is not his joy. And "the love of the Father" may be resting on that man only the more for his relation to that world to which he is unwillingly bound by circumstances over which he has no control.

III. Love is the resting of the affections. Where the heart settles and abides, there we say it lives. It is the satisfying point of desire. There are two great antagonistic principles in every man's heart, and the only way to expel the one is to

bring the other to bear, for they will never long remain together. If we love God, we shall not want the world. As the child's toy grows valueless to the man, as the track we leave glistening behind us across the ocean, as the dark pit from which we mount up into daylight—such, and less than such, when you have once felt a Father's mercy and tasted a Father's love, will all this world seem to you.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1865.

WORLDLY Affections Destructive of Love to God.

There are things in the world which, although not actually sinful in themselves, do nevertheless so check the love of God in us as to stifle and destroy it. They will, by a most subtle but inevitable effect, stifle the pure and single love of our hearts towards God, and that in many ways. For, in the first place, they actually turn away the affections of the heart from God. Love of worldly things plainly defrauds Him of our loyalty, and checks, if it does not absolutely thrust our love to Him out of our hearts. And, in the next place, it impoverishes, so to speak, the whole character of the mind. Even the religious affections which remain undiverted are weakened and lowered in their quality. They are like the thin fruits of an exhausted soil. Consider somewhat more closely the particular consequences of this love of the world.

I. It brings a dulness over the whole of a man's soul. To stand apart from the throng of earthly things and to let them hurry by as they will and whither they will is the only sure way to calmness and clearness in the spiritual life. It is by living much alone with God, by casting off the burden of things not needful to our inner life, by narrowing our toils and our wishes to the necessities of our actual lot, that we become familiar with the world unseen.

II. As we grow to be attached to the things that are in the world, there comes over us what I may call a vulnerableness of mind. We lay ourselves open on just so many sides as we have objects of desire. We give hostages to this changeful world, and we are ever either losing them or trembling lest they be wrested from us. Every earthly fondness is an ambush for the solicitations of the wicked one. We can with great care in due season disentangle ourselves from all needless hindrances. The rest will be no let to the love of God. All pure loves may dwell under its shadow. Only we must not suffer them to shoot above and to overcast it, for the love of

God will not grow in the shade of any worldly affection. Above all, let us pray Him to shed abroad in our hearts more and more of His love, that is, a fuller and deeper sense of His exceeding love towards us.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 62.

REFERENCE: ii. 15.—E. J. Hardy, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 221.

Chap. ii., vers. 15-18.

THE World and the Father.

I. While St. John looks encouragingly and hopefully on the young men, while he sees in them the strength of the time that is as well as of the time that is to come, he is also fully alive himself, and he wishes them to be alive, to the danger of their new position. They may forget their heavenly Father's house, just as any child may forget his earthly father's house. And the cause will be the same. The attractions of the outward world, the attractions of the things that are in this world—these are likely to put a great chasm between one period of their life and another; these may cause that the love of the Father shall not be in them. They are to beware of love of the world, because, if it possesses them and overmasters them, they will assuredly lose all sense that they ever did belong to a Father, and that they are still His children. The Father's love must prevail over this, or it will drive the Father's love out of us. The Father's love to the world which He has created is never absent from the Apostle's mind; he does not wish it to be ever absent from the minds of the young men to whom he is writing. If they keep up the recollection of it, they will in new circumstances and amidst new trials retain the freshness of their childish feelings; the home and the family will be dearer to them than ever.

II. Here, then, are good reasons why the young men shall not love the world, neither the things that are in the world. For if they do, (1) their strength will forsake them; they will give up the power that is in them to the things on which the power is to be exerted; they will be ruled by that which they are meant to rule. (2) Next, they will not have any real insight into these things or sympathy with them. Those who love the world, those who surrender themselves to it, never understand it, never, in the best sense, enjoy it; they are too much on the level of it—yes, too much below the level of it, for they look up to it, they depend upon it—to be capable of contemplating it and of appreciating what is most exquisite in it.

"He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." He has attached himself to the unchangeable, the eternal; he belongs to an order which cannot disappear. It is the order of Him whose children we are; of Him who created the world and all that is in it; of Him who loved the world, and sent His Son into it to claim it as His.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 117.

REFERENCES: ii. 16, 17.—W. J. Dawson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 406; J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 230.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

THE Apostle draws a contrast, and bids us choose which of two things we prefer. "The world," he says, "passeth away, and the lust thereof"; at its best it is but for a moment; "but he that doeth the will of God," hard though it may be at the time, "abideth for ever."

I. Now the world, so far as it is summed up in man, may be roughly divided into three spheres: one of those who act, one of those who think, and one of those who enjoy. In the first sphere, love of power is the dominant idea; and, worked out to its grandest result, it is embodied in empire. In the second, love of knowledge is the supreme attraction; and here we meet men of letters. In the third, the end of life is represented by the rich man centred in Christ's parable: "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," and here for pleasure we can find a name. The Apostle tells us that in each and all of those spheres "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof," and sooner or later we shall find it out. "The world passeth away." Men cease to care for it even before they are done with it; for it cannot satisfy the nature that was made by God, and they in time discover it.

II. God desires and proposes three main things for us: duty, goodness, and truth. Duty means our filling the place and doing the work assigned to us, whether it be of kings or of peasants. Not to be happy, but to be good, is the true aim of an enlightened conscience; and often the goodness comes through the lost happiness, because happiness rests on circumstances, and goodness on discipline. We shall live if we do the will of God—live, not only there, but here; live, not only in eternity, but in time; live though we be dead, and buried, and forgotten. This is completed immortality: to abide

everlastingly first in the life and fruition of God, with whom, in His life, and truth, and energy, and holiness, we are joined already in a completed and mystic union; and when those truthful seeds of goodness are wafted over the spaces of the ages from our poor lips and lives, they will ripen in a kindly soil into eternal life.

BISHOP THOROLD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 65.

OBEDIENCE the Only Reality.

In a certain sense, all things, the most shadowy and fleeting—the frosts, and dews, and mists of heaven—are real. Every light which falls from the upper air, every reflection of its brightness toward heaven again, is a reality. It is a creature of God, and is here in His world fulfilling His word. But these things we are wont to take as symbols and parables of unreality, and that because they are changeful and transitory. It is clear, then, that when we speak of reality we mean things that have in them the germ of an abiding life. In strictness of speech we can call nothing real which is not eternal. Now it is in this sense that I say the only reality in the world is a will obedient to the will of God.

I. It is plain that the only reality in this visible world is man. Of all things that have life without a reasonable soul, we know no more than that they perish. Nothing survives but the mass of human life, and that not blended as before, but each as several and apart as if none lived before God but he only. And thus it is that all that is real in the world is ever passing out of it—tarrying for a while in the midst of shadows and reflections and then, as it were, melting out of sight.

II. Again, as the only reality in the world is man, so the only reality in man is his spiritual life. Nothing of all we have and are in this world save only our spiritual life, and that which is impressed upon it and blended with it, shall we carry into the world unseen. The aim of our life ought then to be to partake of the eternal obedience. Nothing else is worth our living for. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is confounded at its own perpetual changes; it sees that none of its schemes abide, that it daily grows more weary of toiling and more transient in its toils. All men are conscious of this. They crave after something through which they may submit themselves to the realities of the eternal world. And for this end was the visible Church ordained. To meet the yearnings

of our baffled hearts, it stands in the earth as a symbol of the everlasting; under the veil of its material sacraments are the powers of an endless life; its unity and order are the expression of heavenly things, its worship of an eternal homage. Blessed are they that dwell within its hallowed precinct, shielded from the lures and spells of the world, living in plainness, even in poverty, hid from the gaze of men, in silence and solitude walking with God.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 129.

RIVER and Rock.

There are but two things set forth in this text, which is a great and wonderful antithesis between something which is in perpetual flux and passage and something which is permanent. If I might venture to cast the two thoughts into metaphorical form, I should say that here are a river and a rock, the one the sad truth of sense, universally believed and as universally forgotten; the other the glad truth of faith, so little regarded or operative in men's lives.

I. Note the river, or the sad truth of sense. You observe that there are two things in my text of which this transiency is predicated, the one the world, the other the lust thereof; the one outside us, the other within us. As the original implies even more strongly than in our translation, "the world" is in the act of "passing away." Like the slow travelling of the scenes of some movable panorama, which glide along even as the eye looks upon them, and are concealed behind the side flats before the gaze has taken in the whole picture, so equably, constantly, silently, and therefore unnoticed by us, all is in a state of motion. There is no present time. Even whilst we name the moment it dies. The drop hangs for an instant on the verge, gleaming in the sunlight, and then falls into the gloomy abyss that silently sucks up years and centuries. There is no present, but all is movement. If a man has anchored himself to that which has no perpetual stay, so long as the cable holds, he follows the fate of the thing to which he has pinned himself; and if it perish, he perishes, in a very profound sense, with it. If you trust to the leaky vessel, when the water rises in it it will drown you, and you will go to the bottom with the craft to which you have trusted. If you sink all in the little ship which carries Christ and His fortunes, you will come with Him to the haven. When they build a new house in Rome, they have to

dig down through sometimes sixty or a hundred feet of rubbish that runs like water, the ruins of old temples and palaces, once occupied by men in the same flush of life in which we are now. We, too, have to dig down through ruins, until we get to rock, and build there, and build securely. Withdraw your affections, and your thoughts, and your desires from the fleeting, and fix them on the permanent. If a captain takes anything but the pole-star for his fixed point, he will lose his reckoning, and his ship will be on the reefs; if we take anything but God for our supreme delight and desire, we shall perish.

II. The rock, or the glad truth of faith. Obedience to God's will is the permanent element in human life. Whosoever humbly and trustfully seeks to mould his will after the Divine will, and to bring God's will into practice in his doings—that man has pierced through the shadows and grasped the substance, partakes of the immortality which he adores and serves. Himself shall live for ever in the true life, which is blessedness. His deeds shall live for ever when all that lifted itself in opposition to the Divine will shall be crushed and annihilated.

A. MACLAREN, *The God of the Amen*, p. 248.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—T. Binney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 129; J. Greenfield, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 325; Dean Bradley, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 17; A. Legge, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 120; A. Raleigh, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 157.

Chap. ii., ver. 18.—"Little children, it is the last time."

THE Dispensations.

Consider the leading dispensations under which mankind has been placed.

I. A single arbitrary restriction, issued merely as a test of obedience, was the first of them.

II. The dispensation of experienced punishment on the part of the parent, of ancestral precept on the part of the children, next began and ran its course.

III. An additional dispensation was instituted in the announcement of the Deluge to the patriarch Noah and the direction associated with it to commence the building of the Ark.

IV. In the next dispensation human law was instituted and sanctioned by Heaven. It was the dispensation of the magistrate.

V. It was succeeded by the dispensation of Divine law, promulgated with the most awful solemnity and having annexed to it the most tremendous sanctions.

VI. With Samuel and the succession of prophets commenced a new era, about three hundred and fifty years after the giving of the law.

VII. The final dispensation was now at hand. The great Deliverer appeared, and revealed a wholly new arrangement, under which and in virtue of which God would henceforth deal with man. The new light which had fallen from heaven upon a benighted and lost world may be reduced to three particulars: (1) perfect absolution from the guilt of past sin; (2) a communication of Divine strength through outward means; (3) a perfect and explicit law, embodying the purest morality which it is possible to conceive.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 285.

Chap. ii., vers. 18-23.

THE Last Time; the Christ; the Antichrist; the Chrism.

I. The Apostles said that a new age was at hand, the universal age, the age of the Son of man, which would be preceded by a great crisis that would shake not earth only, but heaven, not that only which belonged to time and the condition of man as related to time, but also all that belonged to the spiritual world and to man's relations with it. They said that this shaking would be that it might be seen what there was that could not be shaken, which must abide. I cannot tell what physical changes St. John or the other Apostles may have looked for. That they did not anticipate the passing away of the earth, what we call the destruction of the earth, is clear from this: that the new kingdom they spoke of was to be a kingdom on earth as well as a kingdom of heaven. But their belief that such a kingdom had been set up, and would make its power felt as soon as the old nation was scattered, has, I think, been abundantly verified by fact. I do not see how we can understand modern history properly till we accept that belief.

II. Our Lord had clearly intimated in His last discourse to the disciples that before the end came false Christs should arise and should deceive many. "These antichrists," St. John says, "have gone out from us, because they were not of us." We can understand very well what he means by the facts of Church history. The belief in spiritual powers was strong in that age. The Gospel strengthened and deepened it, but it existed before the Gospel. Many of those who joined the Church exulted in the gifts for their own sake, in the inspiration for its own sake. These became enchanters and impostors

of the worst kind. Their chrism or anointing was to set them in high places; Christ's made Him the Servant of all. "But," continues the Apostle, in words which have surprised many, "ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." If they believed, they had God's Holy Spirit; these antichrists would not, could not, deceive them. They might be deceived in their interpretation of a book: their intellects might fail to discern the force of sentences; but if they were simple and childlike, if they yielded to the guidance of the Spirit, who was to make them simple and childlike, they would not be deceived about a man, they would know whether he was true or a liar.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 134.

Chap. ii., vers. 23-28.

THE Place of the Doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in Christian Ethics.

I. St. John is especially occupied throughout his Gospel in setting forth the ground and principle of the obedience of the Son. It is filial obedience. It is the obedience of a Son to a Father, in whom He delights, and who delights in Him. And so He reveals the Father. And the Apostles, receiving Him as the Christ, learnt from Him not to think of the Godhead as self-willed power or sovereignty. They thought of a Father and a Son. They could not see the will of the Father except in the submission of the Son. They were Jews; they had a greater horror of dividing the Godhead, of setting up two gods, than any of their countrymen had. But it was precisely this belief in the unity of the Father and the Son which kept them from dividing the Godhead.

II. St. John believed that Jesus, being the Son of God and the Son of man, was the real High-priest of the universe; that He had received the true anointing, the Divine Spirit of His Father; that this Spirit had not been poured on Him alone, but had run down to the skirts of His garments; that He was raised on high that men on earth might be filled with it. Because this Spirit of Christ, the Anointed One, was present with them, because God had promised that it should be renewed in them day by day, as the dew fell every day upon the hills, therefore they could as brethren dwell in unity; therefore the Church could live on amidst all the powers, seen and unseen, which were threatening to destroy it. When was there less of that dwelling together in unity which the Psalmist

pronounced to be so good and comely than in our time? And surely all the arguments and arrangements in the universe will not bring it one whit nearer to us. We shall become more and more separate, each man will shut himself up more closely in his own notions, conceits, and selfish pursuits, until we all own that we require the Spirit of God, of unity, to keep us one. Then we shall find that He who has breathed into our nostrils the breath of life does not deny us this more needful breath, this deeper life.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 152.

Chap. iii., ver. 1.—"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

THE Love that calls us Sons.

Notice—I. The love that is given. We are called upon to come with our little vessels to measure the contents of the great ocean, to plumb with our short lines the infinite abyss, and not only to estimate the quantity, but the quality, of that love which in both respects surpasses all our means of comparison and conception. Properly speaking, we can do neither the one nor the other, for we have no line long enough to sound its depth, and no experience which will give us a standard with which to compare its quality. But all that we can do John would have us do—that is, look, and ever look, at the working of that love till we form some not wholly inadequate idea of it. We have to turn to the work of Christ, and especially to His death, if we would estimate the love of God. According to John's constant teaching, that is the great proof that God loves us. The most wonderful revelation to every heart of man of the depth of that Divine heart lies in the gift of Jesus Christ. The Apostle bids me "behold what manner of love."

II. Look, next, at the sonship which is the purpose of His given love. It has often been noticed that the Apostle John uses for that expression "the sons of God," another word from that which his brother Paul uses. John's phrase would perhaps be a little more accurately translated "children of God," whilst Paul, on the other hand, very seldom says "children," but almost always says "sons." Of course the children are sons, and the sons are children, but still the slight distinction of phrase is characteristic of the men and of the different points of view from which they speak about the same thing. John's word lays stress on the children's kindred nature with their

father and on their immature condition. What is implied in that great word by which the Almighty gives us a name and a place as of sons and daughters? Clearly, first, a communicated life, therefore, second, a kindred nature which shall be "pure as He is pure," and third, growth to full maturity.

III. Now still further let me ask you to look at the glad recognition of this sonship by the child's heart. Notice the clause added in the Revised Version, "And such we are." It is a kind of "aside," in which John adds the "Amen" for himself and for his poor brothers and sisters toiling and moiling obscure among the crowds of Ephesus to the great truth. He asserts his and their glad consciousness of the reality of the fact of their sonship, which they know to be no empty title.

IV. We have here, finally, the loving and devout gaze upon this wonderful love. "Behold," at the beginning of my text, is not the mere exclamation which you often find both in the Old and in the New Testaments, which is simply intended to emphasise the importance of what follows, but it is a distinct command to do the thing—to look, and ever to look, and to look again, and live in the habitual and devout contemplation of that infinite and wondrous love of God.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 241.

REFERENCES: iii. 1.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 208; M. G. Pearse, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 65; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 333; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 290; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 367. iii. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 44; A. Mahan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 184. iii. 1-3.—*Homilist*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 341. iii. 1-5.—A. Cooper, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 344; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 107.

Chap. iii., ver. 2.—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

CONSIDER the short word "now." What is time present? What is the meaning of "now"?

I. This is a matter not so plain, nor lying so much on the surface, as we might at first sight imagine. Time is altogether a mysterious thing. There is every reason to believe that time is nothing more than a state ordained by God for the purposes of, and as a condition of, His finite creation. Succession, the waxing onward, *i.e.*, of hours and days and years, is that without which we cannot conceive existence at all. But that

is not the condition of God's own being. His being is independent of the condition which limits ours. With Him is no waxing onward, no succession of hours and days and years. He is the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity. He is the Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

II. There is no such thing as "now," properly and strictly speaking. Time is a rapid stream in which no point is ever stationary. But—and this is the important consideration—it is a tendency inherent in us ever to be arresting in our thoughts certain portions of time and treating them as if they were, for certain purposes, stationary, and unaffected for the moment by the rapidity of transit of the whole. With reference to the subject of which the Apostle is writing, this—this state revealed for and during this present space of time—is all we know and all we can speak of. A ray of light is shed down on one portion of our course; in that portion all is distinct and clear—all, that is, which it is necessary for us to know and to have revealed. Does not this clothe with immense interest and importance this present? We stand, as it were, on a promontory, and before and around us are the infinite waters. By our life here, by our gathering strength and our forming ourselves here, will the character of that vast unknown voyage be determined. Remember that as it is by very common acts and daily recurring duties that the main work of life must be carried on, so it is by these common thoughts made solemn that the soul's great work must be done.

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 1.

POSSIBILITIES of the Future.

We are grateful when we find in the word of God the recognition of the fact that that which is of the nature of perfection is quite incomprehensible to us; that we do not understand God Himself; that we do not understand the heavenly state; that we do not understand what our own perfected natures ought to be, nor what they are who have risen and are among "the spirits of just men made perfect." The annunciation of our ignorance reassures and comforts us.

I. All knowledge is measured by the attaining power of the human faculties. We do not know but there may be revelations coming to us all the time which break on us as the waves break on unknown shores. This is a fact which explains much of what men stumble over in regard to Divine revelation; for it

has been supposed that the revelation of God would be one that would take all things of the Spirit, and shape them into crystalline accuracy, and put them beyond all cavil before men, whereas it is a revelation which is relative to the unfolding process of human life and of nature. As the eye increases in power it is able to bear more and more light; and as the power of apprehension in men has increased they have been able to take in more and more truth. And the word of God has been given to the world little by little. Small were the elements that were revealed at first. These elements have grown as men grew. And revelation has not preceded comprehension, but has rather followed it, because men cannot understand faster than they have the capacity to understand. The grand fact, then, on which all reasoning in respect to final states must proceed, is this: that man is not a creature complete and ended, but is a being who is in a state of change and process, as is distinctly recognised in the word of God; and that all teaching must conform to that universal and fundamental principle of evolution which is going on in the understanding and moral parts of human nature.

II. See how clear now, in the light of this thought, comes out the passage of our text, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." It carries with it a magisterial idea. Now that we are the sons of God, the higher things rule the lower; and higher than anything else, Paul being our witness, are faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love. The relation is to be that of sonship. We are to come, not into the relationship of magisterial power, nor of justice, nor of vengeance, but of love; and the centre of the universe is love; and the farther we go toward that perfection, the nearer we shall be to God. We have the hint of love here; but we are to see its full disclosure in the world to come: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We are on this side in the beginning of it; and when we reach the other side—when we have sloughed the chaff in which we grew, when we are wheat gathered into the eternal garner, when we are where all parts of our nature are effluent and effulgent, when we are in a society whose public sentiment nourishes and helps us, when we are in a sphere where God Himself is personally present—though it doth not yet appear what we shall be then, it is because it is too high, too large, for any man to think of in this mortal state. Round and round the earth goes the spirit of instruction and inspiration, pouring

out things which give to a man some hints (you cannot give him much more), some slight notion, of the vastness of that God who fills all space, all time, all eternity. And so, when we think of Him, sometimes we think of Him as a Father, sometimes as a Brother, sometimes as a Comforter, sometimes as a Leader, sometimes as a Judge, sometimes as a King, sometimes as one thing and sometimes as another. These, however, are only images, symbols, giving us intimations of qualities; but by-and-by we shall see Him as He is. The limitation of human faculty shall not prevent our knowing what God is. Now we have no conception of His form or of His glory except from the most insignificant sources; but the time is coming when we shall go home as the sons of God, and shall be changed, throwing off the raiment and chains of slaves—for we have been in bondage: the time is coming when we shall be emancipated, and shall stand in the presence of God; and then we shall no longer go by hints and notions. "We shall see Him as He is."

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 353.

Chap. iii., ver. 2.—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

IMMORTALITY.

I. This is revelation's last word on a great subject which theologians have too often forgotten in their positive statements and assumptions. Our English version does not quite correctly represent the Greek original. It is not "It does not appear as a result of human inference or speculation," but "It has not yet been manifested or revealed." God Himself still wraps our destiny among His "hidden things." Even Paul, when wading in these perilous depths, and talking of the change that awaits all, and attempting to describe the properties of a "spiritual body," felt himself to be confronted with a "mystery," and while satisfied that there would be a victory over the grave, and that mortality would be swallowed up in life, wisely brought back his readers' thoughts from dreamland to reality by bidding them simply "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they knew that their labour was not in vain in the Lord."

II. Nor can it be said that the great Teacher Himself, when He most clearly proclaimed the doctrine of the resurrection, drew aside for more than the briefest moment the curtain by which the mystery is veiled. But in the dim gloom that shrouds the land beyond the grave there is a streak of light like some

sudden lightning flash, illuminating the darkness with hopes full of immortality; in the still silence of the chamber of death there is a voice heard, sustaining the soul in its passage through the shadowed valley: "He that believeth in Me shall never die." Grant me a right to believe in a personal God, in a living Christ, in an indwelling Spirit, in a life of the world to come, and, like that ship driven up and down in Adria upon which no small tempest lay, I shall have, as it were, my four anchors cast out of the stern, while I "wait for the day."

BISHOP FRASER, *University Sermons*, p. 167.

I. WE Christians are now, in this our earthly life, children of God. He is interested in the welfare of each with inexpressible tenderness and sympathy. He has showered upon us magnificent gifts, if we will but acknowledge them and use them to His glory. There is not one among us so poorly endowed but that his heart can swell with love of good, and admiration, and reverence, can feel the beauty and tenderness of the life of Jesus Christ, can believe in a God who hears prayer, and so taste of the powers of the world to come. And these are glorious gifts, the gifts of a Father to children whom He loves and respects.

II. There is a future awaiting us all beyond, and greater than all that we have ever yet reached. A child of God cannot die for ever. Nothing can take him out of his Father's hands. Wherever he is, he must be about his Father's business. If he sleep for a time, it will be to gather strength for ampler service. "If he sleep, he shall do well," or if he enter at once on some fresh period of growth, of this at least faith assures us: that it must be growth towards God, and not away from Him. By some means, in some sphere of being, the child must be drawing nearer to his heavenly Father.

III. As to the nature of this future being, this much at least we know: that we shall be like God, because we shall see Him as He is. To see God is to be like Him. The man that gazes on the Divine is already transfigured and become a partaker of the Divine nature. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Thought fails in trying to conceive of this splendid growth that awaits us after death, when, by God's mercy, the lowliest will be "something far advanced in state," with a Divinely granted work adjusted to his renewed powers. This only we know as the climax and consummation of all: that we shall be like God, for we shall see Him as He is.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 150.

I. We stand, then, on this bright, illuminated platform of the present, this sunny promontory in the midst of the dark, infinite ocean, and what is that light upon us which is said to be so clear? Now we are children of God, children of God. We are here introduced to a Being above us, a Being from whom we are said to have sprung, in some sense. Who and what is this Being? How can we know anything of Him? The will of a Person is the only intelligible origin of this world and of ourselves, because that agency is the only one which we know that is not subject to the laws by which matter is bound.

II. Now, this one great point being granted, many others follow from it. If it were the will of that supreme Being to create, if it is His present will to uphold, the universe, then we can judge of His character by the laws which He has established and keeps in working. We see these laws calculated to promote and to conserve order, life, happiness, beauty. He is, then, a Being who loves and approves these, who wills order, life, happiness, beauty, in His creation. But more than this, there are laws in our own minds and spirits as fixed and invariable as those which act on matter; and by the character of these also we may judge of His character who ordained them. In our own spirits there is no rest in evil; He who made us willed that we should be good.

III. On this platform of the present life we have two parties brought together: ourselves and God. The greater part of mankind go on day and night, and never think of the awful presence around them; they lose the safeguard and they lose the dignity of a life in which God's presence is realised. Have you ever travelled as the dawn of a bright day was waxing onward, the place of every object more and more indicated, but a dimness over all, the reaches of the rivers faintly reddening through the mist, the trees and the hills massed together in indistinctness, groups of forms, but without the life of detail? And then on the sudden, as you look, here and there beams of brightness leap forth, the hillsides glow with rosy light, the rocks burn like molten metal, living fire looks forth from the streams, and heaven and earth rejoice because the sun is risen. Even such is the change when the presence of God arises upon the inner life of a man. All things were seen before but dimly and in their outlines; but now they are full of clearness and light. Now, now first, he has put on the dignity of his nature, and is fulfilling the ends of his nature.

H. Alford, *Sons of God*, p. 25.

I. "Now are we children of God." It must be plain to us with very little consideration that the Apostle could not here mean the absolutely general relationship which exists between the great Father and all His creatures. To this there is no exception; all men and all living things may in this sense be said to be children; and the assertion of this fact would lead to no consequences with regard to the future such as are here implied. We are here treating of a state above and beyond nature, a new state, in which we are brought into some different relation to God from that which we held to Him by the mere tie of our creation. As by that we were in some sense His children, so by this we are His children in another and a more blessed sense. So that this of which we speak may well be called a new creation.

II. "Now are we children of God." Now have our spirits become, by some grand and glorious process or other, alive again to God, endued with His very nature, adopted into His family. We could not be children of God, in the sense here intended, without such a new birth, without the entrance of new life into this withered and paralysed noblest portion of us.

III. "Now are we children of God." What a position to stand in, and to what a Father, the recovered, the adopted, the chosen children of Him that made heaven and earth, not destined for, not to end in, this world, but with God's heavenly abode for our Father's house, God's throne for our family centre, the light unapproachable in which He dwelleth pointing out our distant home across the dark waste of life! In the blessedness of this knowledge is all the happiness of the life present, and in the trust which this knowledge gives is all the hope for the great non-apparent future.

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 53.

I. FIRST of all, observe that which must strike every one on hearing the words—viz., that a well-meaning Person is here spoken of as He: "We shall be like Him." The Apostle's thoughts are so fixed on his Divine Master, that He is their continual object, spoken of without introduction or explanation: "We shall be like Him"—the Lord Jesus Christ—"for we shall see Him"—*i.e.*, Christ—"as He is." Christ has entered into and taken upon Him in full that mysterious unknown state; His present shall be our future. When that state, now all dark to us, shall be manifested, we know that it will consist in likeness to Him.

II. To what does this knowledge amount? This is certain: that we—that means His saved ones, His Church—shall see Him as He is, and this, the Apostle argues, can only be brought about by our being like Him. That glory of His cannot be beheld except by those who have entered into His likeness; that we shall see Him as He is is of itself sufficient proof that we must be like Him.

III. But here arises an important question: Who are they that shall be manifested? who are they that shall be like Him, and thereby shall have the sight of Him? Observe that this is not a mere question of bodily sight. Even if it were, we might have something to say of refined vision, of the training of the sense to perceive glory, and majesty, and beauty. Even thus we might say that the eye of man might fail to apprehend that glory even when manifested. In order to see the glorified Redeemer as He is, the eye of man's spirit must be educated. For of this one thing be sure: that, whatever and however great the change may be which shall introduce us into that state, we ourselves shall remain the same. I mean that our inner desires and purposes, our bent of custom and thought—these will not be rooted up and superseded by new ones; but as in this present life the boy is father of the man, and the youth's views and thoughts in their main course survive the change from youth to age, so in our whole life of time and eternity the childhood of the state now present must contain the germs of that future maturity. What has never begun now will not be first implanted then. A man must have yearned after the image of Christ here, if he is to wear the image of Christ there.

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 155.

IN speaking of the new life which the love of the Father hath bestowed on men, we observe—I. That new life begins with new birth. Man is found in the state into which our race has come by the Fall, a state of deadness as to the life of the noblest part of him, viz., his spirit. Over the wide world, to all nations (such is His command), goes the glad message, "Christ in you the hope of glory"—the message which makes known man's disease and God's remedy. The effects of this proclamation, the good spell, or Gospel, going forth upon the world, are two-fold. It acts upon the individual heart, and it acts upon men as a society; it reawakens the dead spirit of him who hears, and it brings about a society or body of men in which this new condition may be put upon men by stated ordinances and a

prescribed covenant. God has ordained the rite of baptism, speaking with His own mouth, and He has appointed it to be the symbol and ordinary vehicle of the new birth, insomuch that St. Paul, writing to Titus, calls the vessel in which the water for baptism was contained "the laver or font of the new birth."

II. Well, then, we are children of God; we are regenerate, new-born. In the Son of His love, who has taken our nature into His Godhead, and has become the Lord our Righteousness, He has adopted us into His family and made us His children. But between various persons among us there is a wide distinction. Some know not of, some care not to know of, this glorious relation between God and themselves. Still it is true of us as a whole, true in the main and general, that now we are children of God; that on this portion of the great stream of time known as the present, and designated by the term "now," there shines this clear beam of God's love to us, by which He hath bestowed on us a place in His family of spiritual children, and hath given us an inheritance among the saints in light. This we know with the knowledge of faith, faith resting on evidence, resting on the assured persuasion of those who can render a reason for their hope.

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 79.

OF the future we know nothing. We may speak of this day, or this year, or this life, and in each case of another day, another year, another life. It doth not yet appear, no one has ever been able to show us, what shall be, or what we shall be. All that we say of our own minds about another day, another year, another life, is founded on surmise, is true on certain conditions. We assume that what has been will continue to be.

I. Surely it is a strange and solemn thing to think of this standing up against total darkness, this evermore taking steps into an unknown void. And still stranger it is to think that we and the whole race of mankind evermore exist and go onwards under these solemn circumstances so quietly, so contentedly, so assuredly. It is as if one should march to the edge of a precipice continually receding before him, but uncertain when it will stop, and he take the step which will be his fall.

II. In the very terms of the text it is taken for granted that there is a future for us beyond the present life. From us as Christians thus much of the darkness has been lifted from the future; we know that it will not bring us annihilation. As the

concealment of the manner and phenomena of the future life is for our God, so is the revealing of the certainty of our further development in it as the perfected children of God. We may work by the sunlight, though we cannot gaze upon the sun.

III. "Who knows if life be death, and death be life?" sang the old Greek tragedian in the days of darkness. What he nobly guessed, we know by faith, and live upon that knowledge. The children of God now are like sick men in the long night—vexed, and tossing, and crying out for repose; in them dwelleth no good thing; anxiety seems too much for them, grace too little. Now are we children of God; still it is an inheritance long coming, a hope deferred that maketh the heart sick. But meanwhile the unknown state is coming nearer and nearer; the streaks of day are gathering in the horizon; like the throbbing of the distant train upon the wind, the tokens of His coming are beginning to be heard. "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 105.

I. IN none of the Old Testament books is any direct revelation made as to what we shall be. Rather is that momentous question, by the very terms of some of these passages, left involved in additional mystery. The absence of sorrow and pain, the presence of triumph and joy, are set forth in the New Testament in most vivid terms; but it is in language drawn entirely from the habits and wants of this our present state, not from the new habits and wants of our future one. What we shall be, if set forth at all, is only set forth by negativing or intensifying that which we are. It is all as if we were with our thoughts and imaginations, even when they are Divinely guided, only building up a ladder which may reach to heaven, but whenever we attempt to place it against the bulwarks of the celestial city, it proves all too short, and will not reach. And so it will be to the end. We shall be changed. We shall pass, as it were, through a crucible, and our whole spirit, soul, and body, remaining in identity the same, will come out new, partakers of a different life, using different senses, thinking different thoughts. On the one hand, this must be; and, on the other, it very well may be.

II. It must be. As flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, so neither can the senses which inform flesh and blood inform us of the realities of that new state. If they bear in their new state some analogy to their present uses, this is all that we can at present surmise. How much of our present selves will

survive the change, how much will bear transmuting into that new existence, whether traits of character, outward or inward, which are now fleeting or unpromising, may pass, as it were, through fire, and become fixed and brightened in the enamel of eternal beauty and freshness, we cannot say; but the change must be: so much is evident. And it very well may be, even according to our present conceptions. As St. Paul shows in the case of the body, so might it be shown in the case of the whole man, with his thoughts and habits. Circumstances in their change will also completely change the character, and thoughts, and habits of a man.

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 131.

SELF-DISCIPLINE.

I. Intelligent service. There is, first, the body. We must take care of that. It needs the full power of forethought and resolution if we are ever to present these bodies as a living sacrifice, such as God could actually view with favour and with pleasure, as something undamaged, unspoiled, sound and whole in every part. And then after the body there is the mind. That is to be transformed by a gradual process of renewal, which will purge it of its old instinctive conformity to the world, those habits and standards we had lived in, and will build up in it a faculty of apprehension and sensitiveness of touch by which it will respond with rapid readiness to all those emotions by which the will of God prompts it towards that which is good, and desirable, and perfect. And then, moreover, as the mind bends to the control of this directed will, it will have to learn its proper place in society and in the Church; it will have to subordinate itself to the general excellence of the whole.

II. The Epiphany is made manifest in our purified lives. His glory is to show itself through us. He houses the glory within the body of His believers, and thence He shines out upon the world, as through a lamp, and their goodness of life is the vehicle of illumination, the medium through which His light passes out to irradiate the surrounding darkness. That is the plain band that binds the Epistles to the Gospels. The Epistles illustrate the issue and continuance of that which the Gospels require. That very Christ, at whose feet the wise men of the East presented frankincense and myrrh, shall shine out now upon the intellectual thought of the world, through that renewed and transformed mind of those who have won the faculty to recognise what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.

II. Christ's epiphany in the world is bound with terrible intimacy to our moral fidelity to His commandments. It is because we have seen Him that we are summoned to the task of self-discipline. He was manifested to take away our sins. As our task is always simply just to admit Jesus Christ in fuller measure into our souls, therefore, if we can ever succeed in doing this at any one point in our lives, we shall be doing it for all other parts. For Christ is one, and all the variety of duties only represents the behaviour of that one character under varying circumstances. Secure Him, then, at one corner of your being; get closer to Him, then, at some point where you have to beat under some one special temptation, some one all-besetting sin, at some point where you have to work hardest to develop one most needed virtue; admit Him there, by that door, and it is the whole Christ that enters, and the whole of you will feel the effect of that entrance; the whole of you will be nearer Him; the whole of you will be warmer, purer, truer, gentler; through every part of you the presence now admitted will speak.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 148.

Chap. iii., ver. 2.—"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

I. WHAT is this sight awaiting us which shall accomplish so much? Observe—(1) It is the sight of a personal Saviour. "We shall see Him." It is only natural that we should desire to see the countenance of one whose works we have read, and whose friends we have often met, and who is often in our thoughts and affections. It is but natural that there should be a longing to see any one of whom we have read much, and of whom we have thought more. Is it, then, surprising that when the heaven of the saint is described it should be represented as the sight of a personal Christ? Yes, we shall see the Christ of the Scriptures, the Christ of whom Moses and the prophets spake. We shall see also the Christ of our own thoughts. There is not a believer but has his ideal Saviour. We shall see Him—a living, personal Saviour, arrayed in human form. We shall not have to inquire who He is, or where He is. We shall see Him in the very identical body that once hung in shame on Golgotha. (2) It is the sight of a glorified Saviour: "We shall see Him as He is." Jesus has been beheld as we shall never behold Him. We shall never see Him as the Magi saw Him: the Infant; we shall never see Him as the disciples saw Him: so tired out that He was sound asleep on the open deck of a fisherman's boat;

we shall never see Him, the cursed Substitute, groaning under the horrible load of His people's sins; but as He is now: highly exalted. Take the most blessed season earth has ever known, and it is only seeing Christ through the glass darkly. And these feebler manifestations are never as clear as they might be. I question whether there has ever been a saint but has had in some measure a veil over his soul. The veil may vary in thickness. Sometimes it is dense and dark as a London fog, and at other times it seems no more hindrance than the thinnest gauze. Then we see, as it were, the outlines of His beauty, but no more.

II. Notice the effect wrought by the sight: "We shall be like Him." In a minor degree, this is true on earth. Nobody can look on Jesus long without getting something of His image. Any man or woman who is in habitual communion with Jesus Christ will have something about them that betrays their intercourse. Now, if seeing Jesus through a glass darkly makes me something like Him, seeing Him in all His glory, without a veil, will make me altogether like Him. When this poor green bud is brought into the sunshine of His countenance in glory, how in a moment will all the green shields that hide its beauty fly apart, and all its leaves of loveliness expand in His own light, and I shall be like Him!

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 848.

THE Apostle admits that there is obscurity hanging over much of our eternal future. He glances at this part slightly; but it is the background of that one bright scene to which he afterwards points. (1) The place of our future life is obscure. (2) The outward manner of our final existence is also uncertain. (3) Many of the modes and feelings in the life to come perplex us. The atmosphere is too subtle, the azure is deep even to darkness, and from every endeavour we must come back to realise the lesson of our present state: that, while Christians are now the sons of God, the heir is but a child. It would be unsatisfactory enough if this were all that could be said and done. But the Apostle puts this dark background upon the canvas, that he may set in relief a central scene and figure: Christ and our relation to Him.

I. The first thing promised is the manifestation of Christ: "Christ shall appear." It is not merely that Christ shall be seen, but seen as never before. The first thought of the Apostle was no doubt the human nature of Christ as appearing again to the eyes of His friends, but he must also have thought of His

Divine nature. The glory that He had with the Father before the world was shall be resumed, and if we may venture to say it, raised, for the glory of the Divine shall have added to it the grace of the human.

II. The second thing promised at the appearance of Christ is a full vision on our part; we shall see Him as He is. This implies a necessary and very great change on us before we can bear and embrace, even in the smallest measure, the perfect manifestation of Christ. We shall be changed (1) in our material frame; (2) in our soul. It will be a vision free from sin in the soul, free from partiality, intense and vivid, close and intimate.

III. The third thing promised is complete assimilation to Christ. We shall be like Him. (1) Our material frame will be made like unto Christ's glorious body. (2) Our spiritual nature will be like His. God has used this way of revealing the future (*a*) as a method of spiritual test and training; (*b*) as a means of quieting our thoughts; (*c*) as a means of making Christ the centre of the soul's affections and aims.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 365.

THE Unrevealed Future of the Sons of God.

I. The fact of sonship makes us quite sure of the future. That consciousness of belonging to another order of things because I am God's child will make me sure that when I am done with earth the tie that binds me to my Father will not be broken, but that I shall go home, where I shall be fully and for ever all that I so imperfectly began to be here, where all gaps in my character shall be filled up, and the half-completed circle of my heavenly perfectness shall grow like the crescent moon into full-orbed beauty.

II. Now I come to the second point, namely, that we remain ignorant of much in that future. That happy assurance of the love of God resting upon me, and making me His child through Jesus Christ, does not dissipate all the darkness which lies on that beyond. "We are the sons of God, and," just because we are, "it does not yet appear what we shall be," or, as the words are rendered in the Revised Version, "it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." The meaning of that expression "It doth not yet appear," or "It is not made manifest," may be put into very plain words. John would simply say to us, "There has never been set before man's eyes in this earthly life of ours an example or an instance of what the sons of God

are to be in another state of being." And so because men have never had the instance before them they do not know much about that state.

III. The last thought is this: that our sonship flings one all-penetrating beam of light on that future in the knowledge of our perfect vision and perfect likeness: "We know that when He shall be manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." To behold Christ will be the condition and the means of growing like Him.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 255.

REFERENCES: iii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 196; vol. ii., Nos. 61, 62; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. i., p. 18; R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 6; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 228; *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 259; E. D. Solomon, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 353; P. W. Darton, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxiv., p. 101; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 353; vol. ix., p. 337; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 265; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 31.

Chap. iii., vers. 2, 3.

THE Believer's Sonship.

It is a law of our nature, or rather of our mental constitution, that in looking at any particular truth or subject we unconsciously present it in that aspect which strikes ourselves most forcibly, or which is the most congenial to our own minds. Take, for example, the heaven of the believer's hope and prospect. While the object of expectation has been one with the universal Church, the features of that object have been various as in the glass of the kaleidoscope, and individuals have dwelt for their comfort upon the different aspects of its blessedness, according to their own felt need or yearning sorrow. Thus it is said of Wilberforce, whose life was one sunny activity of benevolence, unbroken by the wearing languors of the sick-bed, that when he thought of heaven it was as a place which refined and sublimated every righteous affection, that his central idea was love; while the suffering Robert Hall, whose life was a torturing illness, and his brow beaded ever with the sweat of pain, murmured in his acutest paroxysms of the promised recompense of rest. Thus we are not surprised to find John the beloved declaring the gospel of love, warming every precept to its genial inspiration, and exhorting the whole body of the faithful to its cultivation and spread. In the words of the text there is a rich mine of comforting truth. It brings before us—

I. The believer's present relationship: "Now are we the sons of God." Who shall estimate the preciousness of this rare

and hallowed privilege? God commendeth His love to us, not merely in that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," but in "that we might receive the adoption of sons."

II. The text gives us a glimpse of the believer's future. There is a general uncertainty, redeemed by a particular assurance: "We shall be like Him," etc. This is not the language of hesitation, nor even of conjecture, but of firm and well-warranted conviction. To be like Christ, fully and without a drawback to reflect His image—this is the destiny of our ransomed nature.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 66.

OUR Views of Heaven.

I. When we claim on behalf of the Christian morality a purity or disinterestedness greater than that of any other religion, we are sometimes met with the reply that the motives it offers to man, however they may be disguised in language, are really selfish, inasmuch as they appeal to his self-interest: "Do this, and you shall obtain a reward; do that, and you shall be punished." And these objectors say that, so far from Christianity inspiring men with the most perfect spirit of self-devotion, it is quite impossible that it should do so; and that men in ages preceding the Christian revelation who gave up their lives for their country or one another without any expectation of recompense in another world were in reality exhibiting a much more perfect form of sacrifice.

II. St. John says plainly in the passage of his first epistle which is before us that our view of a future life determines our present one: "Whoso hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." He says boldly, therefore, that the hope of reward is a powerful agent, in fact the only effectual one. As men learned what was the treasure which God offered to every one of them, so they learned to hope for that treasure thereafter, and to lay it up for themselves while on earth by following the Divine likeness. Christ did appeal to men's self-interest, but not till He had taught them that their interest was to be perfect, as their Father in heaven was perfect. To lose self in Christ, not to find it haunting us still, is the heaven which God has promised to His redeemed.

III. The desire for repose, the desire to find rest for the spirit in some thing or some person, is the master yearning of every man's life. We want to be delivered from falsehoods, from vanities of all kinds, from delusions which hold us one

day only to yield to others the next. We try to find rest in some object short of the highest, and we feel that we are only hiding from us our own poverty, and that when this object has been attained there will remain a power, a righteousness, above us, to which we have not been reconciled. St. John offers us a method different from our own. He does not say, "Be good, be true, and you shall find out God." He says, "Take to your comfort a hope, and that hope shall make you pure."

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 13.

SONSHIP the Foreshadowing of Heaven.

I. In our text we have concealment: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Christ reveals the fact of immortality, gives the promise of immortality, but tells us little or nothing about the outward conditions of immortality. A Christian must frankly accept this ignorance. By the terms of his Christian covenant he engages to walk by faith, not by sight. Restlessness, toil, sorrow, bereavement, ignorance, are all outgrowths of sin; and the Bible promises the abolition of these in promising a sinless heaven.

II. But there is revelation as well as concealment. It doth not yet appear, but we know something. Concealments are necessary because of the limitations of our intelligence; but these concealments are in the interest of our knowledge on another side, and are intended to direct our researches into another and more profitable channel. For if we rightly read the New Testament, we find it aiming, not so much to put us in possession of new facts about the future life, as to put us in the right attitude alike toward what is revealed and what is hidden. Our disposition is to inquire into the circumstances of the world to come, while the Gospel persistently counteracts this tendency by showing us that the future life is essentially a matter of character rather than of circumstances. On this side we know something of the heavenly world. We know the moral laws which govern it, for they are essentially the same laws which the Gospel applies here. We know the moral sentiments which pervade heaven. They are the very sentiments which the Gospel is seeking to foster in us here. We know that holiness, which is urged upon us here, is the character of God, and that where a holy God reigns the atmosphere must be one of holiness; that if God is love, love must pervade heaven; that if God is truth, truth must pervade heaven.

III. The essence of the promise is that we shall be like God. Likeness to God comes through vision of God. Love has a power of transformation. In that fact we have both a consolation and an exhortation to duty.

M. R. VINCENT, *The Covenant of Peace*, p. 175.

REFERENCES: iii. 2, 3.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 291; *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 27.

Chap. iii., ver. 3.—"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

WHAT is the effect of this hope upon him who entertains it?

I. "Every man that hath"—that possesses—"this hope in him," this hope resting on him, "purifieth himself, even as He is pure." All hope rests upon some ground or other, if it be a hope of which any account can be given. This hope is founded on Christ. If the ungodly man is forbidden by the character of his life to entertain this hope, then surely the children of God will be warranted by the character of their lives to entertain it. This seems reasonable, but it is very instructive to see that it is not so; the hope rests, not on ourselves at all, but on Him, on our blessed Lord. And how does this instruct us? Why, it teaches us that He and His accomplished work in our natures are absolute all-including facts, to be made the ground of hope simply in themselves, and without digging into this ground, so to speak, any characteristics or experiences, or anything, of our own.

II. What are the fruits of this faith, resulting in hope for the future? "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." His lifelong struggle springs out of his hope, and that hope is grounded on his faith in Christ. He does not carry on this struggle in order that it may in the end result in a hope for the future: if he did, all his efforts would be vain; but he fights on against evil in the power of his faith and hope. He is aware that though perfect likeness to Christ will never be attained till the great change has come, and we see Him as He is, yet for that perfection the present time must be a preparation, or it will never be realised at all. And in that preparation what is the one obstacle which stands between us and likeness to Him? It is all comprehended in one word: we cannot be like Him because we are impure. Our struggle for purity, which is grounded on this hope, has ever before it as its standard and pattern "as He is pure."

H. ALFORD, *Sons of God*, p. 179.

THE Purifying Influence of Hope.

I. Notice the principle that is here, which is the main thing to be insisted upon, namely, if we are to be pure, we must purify ourselves. The very deepest word about Christian effort at self-purifying is this: Keep close to Jesus Christ. Holiness is not feeling; it is character. You do not get rid of your sins by the act of Divine amnesty only. You are not perfect because you say you are, and feel as if you were, and think you are. God does not make any man pure in his sleep. His cleansing does not dispense with fighting, but makes victory possible.

II. This purifying of ourselves is the link or bridge between the present and the future. "Now are we the sons of God," says John in the context. That is the pier on the one side of the gulf. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when He is made manifest we shall be like Him." That is the pier on the other. How are the two to be connected? There is only one way by which the present sonship will blossom and fruit into the future perfect likeness, and that is, if we throw across the gulf, by God's help, day by day here that bridge of our effort after growing likeness to Himself and purity therefrom.

III. This self-cleansing of which I have been speaking is the offspring and outcome of that hope in my text. It is the child of hope. Hope is by no means an active faculty generally. As the poets have it, she may "smile and wave her golden hair," but she is not in the way of doing much work in the world. And it is not the mere fact of hope that generates this effort; it is, as I have been trying to show you, a certain kind of hope: the hope of being like Jesus Christ when "we see Him as He is."

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 3.

REFERENCES: iii. 3.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 98; E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 224; F. H. Dillon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 348; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 250. iii. 4.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 167; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 244; vol. vii., p. 60; vol. x., p. 283. iii. 5.—C. J. Vaughan, *Good Words*, vol. vi., p. 47.

Chap. iii., ver. 8.—"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

WHY Christ came.

I. We are carried here into the very heart of the Gospel; we are told why Christ came, why there is a gospel. Some one may

say that the object of the Gospel is to destroy the works of the devil, which is, I suppose, a Hebrew form of words for sin, and thus the amount of it all is that the one aim of the Gospel is to teach men to lead moral lives. In this tone you hear men speak of the Christian morals as higher and purer than those of other religions or other philosophies. They are Christians, according to their idea of that phrase, because they admire the Sermon on the Mount and the general tone of Scripture. The text does bear on its surface an enforcement of morality. It does imply that Christ's real battle is with sin. It does bid us, if we are Christians, to fight it out with our sins. But the thing wanted was—conscience knows it—a specific medicine for a specific disease, a Divine intervention to repair a breach and a ruin, a supernatural remedy for an unnatural condition. To teach morality to a being whose very will is in bondage is no satisfaction to the demands, to the expectations, of the heart and soul of mankind.

II. "That He might destroy the works of the devil." What have we here? Not, surely, a mere Orientalism for moral evil; not, surely, a chance or a cant phrase for which a mere abstraction might be substituted at pleasure; rather a glimpse faint yet true of a wreck and a chaos utterly unnatural; of a power alien and hostile which has entered, and defiled, and desolated a portion of God's handiwork; something which is not a mere spot, or stain, or disfigurement, but has an influence and an action real and definite, a power which works in the hearts, and lives, and souls of men, and which can only cease to work by being destroyed.

III. And for this purpose the Son of God was manifested. The revelation of the supernatural was the death-blow of the unnatural as such. Conscience accepts, conscience welcomes, conscience springs to grasp, it. We find conscience satisfied, tranquillised, comforted, by the discovery of a love and a power mightier than all the hate and might of evil. We find an argument here, such as there is nowhere else, for renouncing and casting out sin. We do find an echo in all but hardened hearts of that brief, thrilling expostulation of St. John, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

IV. "If the Fall," one has written, "is a fearful tragedy, reparation must be more than an idyll." The man who makes light of Calvary, the man who rests in Deism, the man who thinks ethics enough, and rather compliments the Gospel upon its

morality than views that morality as a revelation—such a man, depend upon it, is a man of either darkened or else unawakened conscience. When he learns the plague of his own heart, then there will be a revelation within of the necessity, of the beauty, of the adaptation and congruity, of a gospel of grace. Then will the words flash upon him with a dazzling lustre, "He manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words of Hope*, p. 15.

THE First Sinner.

Nothing in the whole of Scripture is plainer than its teaching respecting the evil spirit. If he be not a personal reality, the word of God is good for nothing. His agency is closely interwoven with the first man's original sin, as closely interwoven with the second Man's established righteousness; in fact, it forms an integral part of the great whole, which if we attempt to tear away, difficulties beset us far more appalling than anything involved in the doctrine itself thus called in question.

I. Gathering up then the testimony of Scripture respecting Satan, we learn from our Lord's own lips that he abode not in the truth. He was one of those spiritual beings created, like ourselves, in love and living in the love of God. In this love, the spring of all spiritual conscious being, he did not abide. All evil is personal, is resident in a person and springing from the will of a person. And in every such person sin, evil, is a fall, a perversion of previous order and beauty, not in any way an arrangement of original creation.

II. Sin was in this spirit no result of weakness, no distortion of a limited being, endeavouring to escape into freedom. He was mighty, and noble, and free. Out of his very loftiness, out of his spiritual eminence, were those elements constituted which, when once the perversion took place, became the powers and materials of his evil agency. Sin springs not from the body, nor from any of the subordinate portions of our own nature, but is the work of the spirit itself, our highest and our distinguishing part, arises in the very root and core of our immortal and responsible being.

III. All sin is in its nature one and the same thing, whether in purely spiritual beings or in us men, who are both spiritual and corporeal; it is a falling from the love of God and of others into the love of self. And for this reason the fallen spirits are everlastingly tormented; they believe that there is one God,

and tremble at Him as their Enemy, perversely mistrusting His love and hopelessly opposing His will.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 68.

REFERENCES: iii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1728; W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 376. iii. 9.—J. B. Heard, *Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 158. iii. 10.—F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 89. iii. 13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 42. iii. 13, 14.—H. C. Leonard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 160.

Chap. iii., ver. 14.—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

OUR True Orbit.

I. History tells us for how many thousand years men believed that the sun went round the earth. History tells us how men went on century after century inventing new theories to account for the different new facts which this belief had to account for as their knowledge grew. And for how many centuries have men practically set aside the similar truth we are now looking at, the truth that we must not make ourselves the central point of our life, must not look to self first, and make life and the works of life circle round our hopes and fears, but look out into God's great world of life and make others the centre round which we circle, and doing good to them our power of gravitation, by which all things move by secret heavenly attraction, binding us by an unseen mystery to heaven. Self-seeking or self-goodness is no more life than the earth is the centre of the universe. Look on yourself as less than the meanest life you help, not greater; for lo, it is Christ and His life you help. Go out of self; fasten on by cords of love to all those others who have been to you as yet either unthought of, or thought of as helps or hindrances to you, instead of worlds of life in Christ, by being fastened on to which you live. Revolve round others in loving-kindness and faith, instead of making others and your dealings with them revolve round you. "Because ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Your life circles round Him the moment being kind to others becomes the sole aim in all you do.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 155.

BROTHERLY Love.

There are many kinds of knowledge, but the most difficult is self-knowledge. Now in spiritual self-knowledge it is not so

requisite that we be able to say in any given time whereabouts we stand in the Divine life, as it is that we be able to tell at all times whether we do really live unto God or not. This is the only self-examination commanded in the Bible. But we long for some simple, infallible test whereby we may try and determine our own state before God. Such a test we have here: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

I. Look at the thing which is to be known. The idea conveyed in the words is of two states, two lands, separated as by a gulf; and there is now, what one day there will not be, a transit from one to the other. The one side is a land of death. There everything that is done is short and uncertain. Its lights blaze for a moment, then they go out, and when they are gone the night seems darker than if they had never been. It is a country of graves, and the joys of pleasure have no resurrection. On the opposite shore everything is in essential light, because there is a new principle there. That principle is one which works for ever and ever. That light, springing from invisible sources, nourished by hidden nourishments, reaching on to unknown passages, is still gaining more.

II. The sign by which we know it: "We love the brethren." The brethren are those who have the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts, even though there be much clinging to them that is unrefined, and unintellectual, and unpleasing. We must love all the brethren. And this very comprehensiveness of a catholic spirit is the mark of a mind that has had to do with the largeness of an almighty God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 59.

REFERENCES: iii. 14.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 17; S. Minton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 312.

Chap. iii., ver. 15.—"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

THE Peril of Unlawful Venture.

I. Self-control is a thing which we can perfectly well understand in its effects, in its sources, perhaps, not so well. In frail, unassisted man, self-control is a weak and poor safeguard against temptation. Passion and self-interest are too strong for it when it has nothing further to rely on than a man's own resolution and innate sense of right. But here God has been pleased to interfere, and to offer us the help of His grace to

strengthen us in the conflict of life. His character as the Father of our spirits is pledged and committed to giving this grace and furnishing this strength to all that ask for it.

II. God's help is only to be looked for in God's ways, within those limits of serving Him and trusting Him which He has prescribed to all of us. Venture is lawful when we may fairly look, if God's mysterious providence does not interpose to prevent it, for a favourable issue of our labours. This is lawful venture, venture according to the ordinary course of God's providence, defeated and brought to loss only by His mysterious interposition. On the other hand, venture appears to me to be unlawful where no such reasonable prospect of success exists, where there is not, in God's ordinary course of providence, any connection existing between the means used for gain and the event upon which the gain depends. Take the case of one who wagers money on the issue of a matter over which he has not, even humanly speaking, any control. Such a one has no reason whatever to look for a prosperous issue to his venture in the common course of things. The awful name of a murderer clings by implication not only to him who hateth his brother, but to every man who surrenders himself to a pursuit in which he has not the secret of self-control, the fear of God, and the help of His grace.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 339.

REFERENCE: iii. 16-18.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 590.

Chap. iii., vers. 19-21.

THE Good and the Bad Conscience.

There is many a text concerning which it may be said that, without an earnest study of the whole chapter, of the whole context, or of the whole Epistle to which it belongs, it would be impossible to get at its depth and fulness. But happily, as St. Augustine says, if Scripture hath its depths to swim in, it hath also its shallows. Just as the geologist may mark the beauty of the crystal without attempting to set forth all the marvellous and subtle lines of its formation, so, without any possibility of showing all which a text articulates, a preacher may yet be thankful if he be enabled to bring before you with it only one or two thoughts such as may serve to the building up of the Christian life. St. John is dealing in our text with tests of sonship. He is telling us how we may decide the infinitely important question whether or not we are children of God. He is speaking to Christians, Christians, it may be,

wavering, but still Christians, who shone as bright lights in that dark heathen world. However, the Apostle St. John makes love—that is to say, absolute unselfishness, a perfect and intense desire to devote our lives to the good of others—the one supreme test of spirituality. "My little children," he says, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." And then he adds, "And hereby we recognise that we are of the truth, and that truth shall assure our hearts before Him." The word "truth" in St. John, as in many other places of Scripture, means reality. If we belong to the truth, the real and eternal world, then, having God as our hope and strength, we are safe, and the world cannot hurt us; no storms can wreck our inward happiness. If we belong to a false world, our life is a failure, our death a terror. We are on the path that leads to destruction. There are in this world two paths: one a condition of fear and peril, wherein a man walketh in a vain shadow and disquieteth himself in vain; but the other is the hope that maketh not ashamed. St. John refers to conscience as the supreme arbiter in this awful question. Who does not know the use of the conscience? It is to the supreme honour of Greek thought that it brought into use that word, which first occurs in the Apocrypha, that word which describes self-knowledge, to describe that voice of God in the heart of man, a prophet in its information, a priest in its sanctions, and a monarch in its imperativeness. The Hebrews in the Old Testament use the word for truth and spirit to convey the same meaning. And the conscience of each one of us either condemns us or condemns us not.

I. Let us take the case of the absolving conscience: "Brethren, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." The Apostle defines wherein this confidence consists; it is boldness of access to God; it is a certainty that our filial prayers will, in their best and highest sense, be heard and answered. It is the consciousness of a life which leans on the arm of Christ, and keeping His commandments, is so transformed by the spirit of Divine life as to be conscious it is one with God. Yet there is such a thing as a spurious conscience. But when the oracle of conscience has been so tried, it can neither stand John's test nor give us peace. When our conscience acquits us, malediction becomes of none effect. It is simply impossible for any good and great man to go through the world, whether on the lighted stage of a public career, or in the office, or in the workshop, or in the back

street, without the chance of suffering from unkindness and misconception, without not only his real errors, which all men do commit, being exaggerated, but his honest intentions, his most blessed and most intense actions, being depreciated. Yet he will all the while remember this was the case of the Master, Christ. However much reviled, He calmly and humbly committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

II. Now turn to the other case—the case of the condemning conscience: "Brethren, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." What do these words mean? Are they merely a contemplation? Do they mean to warn us? Do they mean that we stand self-condemned in that silent court of justice which we ever bear about within ourselves, ourselves the judge and jury and ourselves the prisoner at the bar? If we stand thus self-condemned by the incorruptible judge within us, in spite of all our ingenious pleadings and infinite excuses for ourselves, how much more searching, more awful, more true, must be the judgment of Him who is "greater than our heart, and who knoweth all things." Or, on the other hand, is it a word of hope? Is it the cry, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee"? Is it the affirmation that if we be but sincere we may appeal to God and not be condemned? I believe this latter is the meaning. The Christian's heart may turn to a gracious, pardoning Omniscience, and be comforted by the thought that his conscience is but a water-pot, whereas God's love is a deep sea of compassion. He will look upon us with larger and other eyes than ours, and make allowance for us all.

F. W. FARRAR, *Family Churchman*, Aug. 1st, 1883.

Chap. iii., vers. 19-22.

GOD GREATER THAN OUR HEART.

I. The subject with which these verses deal is an accusing conscience and its antidote. St. John does not say that the heart may not accuse justly. He does not say that a child of God is sinless by virtue of his relation as a child, and that his self-accusation is quieted by being pronounced groundless. It is entirely possible that one's heart may justly accuse him of sin, and that God's judgment may confirm the accusation of the heart. But he does mean to say that the heart is not the supreme and final arbiter, and that whatever it may accuse us of must

be referred to a higher tribunal. You will observe that emphasis is laid on the words "before Him"—we "shall assure our hearts before Him."

II. God knoweth all things, while our heart is ignorant and blind. Whatever light or power of discernment conscience has, it receives from God. Not a few Christians live habitually in a state of self-accusation. They live in anticipation of Divine judgment. Life is one continuous arraignment at the bar of conscience, spite of all their prayer, and striving, and study of the word. Is it the appropriate daily occupation of a child of God to be a mere bookkeeper, writing down bitter things against himself? And then, once more, it is true that many Christians do not carry up their case from the bar of the heart. It is at this mistake that the Apostle's words are aimed. The whole text carries a protest and an antidote against that kind of piety which is too contemplative and self-scrutinising; which is always studying self for the evidences of a right spiritual relation and condition; which tests growth in grace by the tension of feeling; which limits God's presence by the sense of His presence; which reckons the spiritual latitude and longitude by the temperature of emotion, as if a sailor should take his reckoning by the thermometer. Feeling, religious sensibility, have their place in the Christian economy, and a high and sacred place it is; but its place is not the judgment-seat.

M. R. VINCENT, *The Covenant of Peace*, p. 160.

REFERENCES: iii. 20.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, pp. 123, 137, 151. iii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1855; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 260. iii. 22-24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1103. iii. 23.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., No. 531; Mackarness, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 313. iii. 23, 24.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 316.

Chap. iii., ver. 24.—"And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."

THE Abiding Witness.

I. The first lesson which these words convey is the dignity not only of the state of the saint, but also of the evidence by which he is assured of it. This state consists in the abiding presence of God, and this not only above us, though this is true, not only around us, though this is true, but in us. We must neither pare down the literal fact of this indwelling, nor must we forget the majesty of the Indweller. God Himself dwells within the saints. He dwells, not flashing a ray of His

glory now and then, breaking the natural darkness of the soul for a moment and then leaving it again darker than before, but abiding there, dwelling like the sun in the heavens, with his beams hidden, it may be, sometimes with earthly clouds and mists, but like the sun behind the clouds, filling the soul, as in ancient times He filled the material temple with the glory of His presence.

II. With the dignity we must combine the definite clearness of the test which proves our possession of it, for we might otherwise find great difficulty. By keeping His commandments, we know. We have great cause to bless God for thus resting our hopes on our obedience, which every honest mind can see and recognise. The lesson draws close, and tight, and indissoluble the connection between faith and holiness, the heart and the life, the religion and the character and conduct. It makes Christianity to be a real, practical, working power. (1) The obedience, which is the proof of the Spirit's presence, is not a holiness finished or perfect, otherwise it would belong to none of us this side of heaven. (2) It is a holiness not complete, but progressive. (3) It is not partial. Christian obedience accepts and follows the whole law.

III. The words express the infinite blessedness both of the state and of the evidence. God is the source of life, and when He dwells within the soul He dwells as the spring of life, and every pulse of that life is love, and every thrill of it joy.

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 27.

Chap. iv., ver. 1.—"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

THIS text shows (1) that the highest pretensions may be hypocritical, and therefore mere profession amounts to nothing; (2) that all pretensions should be submitted to trial, and therefore to shrink from trial is to confess incompetence and immorality; (3) that God Himself is the true standard by which to try all men. One man is not to be compared with another; each man is to be judged before God. The fulfilment of this exhortation would be followed by three results: (1) Spiritual adventurers would meet with proper condemnation. All lackadaisical sympathy would be destroyed, etc. (2) The highest piety would be realised, the piety which lives upon God, and seeks truth at all costs, etc. (3) The multiplication of needless

and vexatious sects would be arrested. Little nests of quacks and mutual flatterers would be broken up. Men who live in God despise the concealment of obscure theories and the ostentation of pretentious technicalities. The fulfilment of this exhortation would not, on the other hand, secure monotonous and insipid uniformity of thought, expression, and social development. God's ministry in nature is various, yet nature is one. The illustration applies to the highest life.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 60.

Chap. iv., ver. 1.—"Try the spirits whether they are of God."

I. THERE are questions relating to spiritual influence in which we all, each for himself, ought to have the very deepest interest. For the most persistent sceptic that ever lived cannot deny the fact of spiritual influence. All the influences which proceed from mind to mind are spiritual influences. By certain spiritual or, if you like, mental influences, our conduct is determined, and our characters formed. The Spirit of life, and order, and growth to perfection, which works in the world of matter and also in the mind and soul of man, in the Bible is said to be the Spirit of God; and, on the other hand, all that is evil, and degrading, and dividing is said to be the working of a spirit of disobedience. So that the saving and destroying forces of the world are in perpetual activity.

II. Let me give you one test by which you may try the spirits whether they are of God. We are told in the Bible that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of adoption. And this is the uniting and converting power of the world. (1) It is the converting Spirit, not the spirit of fear and intimidation, not the spirit of the devil and his angels, not the unprincipled spirit of management and of making things easy all round, so that under all circumstances self may be triumphant, but the Spirit which rises up now and then with its saving regeneration in the heart of the cold and bad, the seducer and the faithless, saying, "I am a child of God; shame on me that I have stooped so low and forgotten who I am and what is my birthright," the Spirit which stirs in a man, and floods him over with penitence, and from his crossness and cruelty, his deep commonness and sinfulness, makes him get up and shake himself free. (2) And the same Spirit is the Spirit of unity. The Spirit which tells us we are sons of God tells also that we are brethren, and its word of command is, "Let brotherly love continue."

W. PAGE ROBERTS, *Law and God*, p. 89.

REFERENCES: iv. 1.—W. L. Alexander, *Christian World Pulpit*,

vol. iv., p. 309; J. Kennedy, *Ibid.*, p. 206; A. M. Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 152; J. G. Rogers, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 391. iv. 1, 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 331. iv. 2.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiii., p. 49. iv. 3-7.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 195. iv. 6.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 328; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 297.

Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"Love is of God."

THE Source of Love.

I. Essentially and eternally, all love is of God, and all God is love. To reveal this to man, that stream of paradise was parted, and became into three heads. There was the electing love of God the Father, which gave His Son to the world, and the world to His Son; and there was the love of Jesus to the death, by which He gave Himself, the innocent Sufferer for a guilty race; and there was the love of the patient Spirit in sevenfold offices, and all to comfort those who were unhappy because they were wicked, and wicked because they were unhappy.

II. What do we mean when we say, "Love is of God"? (1) We mean, it is of the nature of God. All love is first in God. (2) Love is of God because it is His gift. Whoever wants real love must ask for it as a creation. It does not spring up here in the lower ground, but it comes down from heaven. If you find it hard to love anybody, you must remember that love is a fruit; and before there can be fruit there must be seed. (3) Love is of God because it is an emanation always flowing. This is the reason why those who live nearest to God grow the most loving. They catch the droppings; they get imbued with that with which they are in contact.

III. The shortest road to almost every good thing is through love. You will have to meet, and to do battle with, many strong things; and not very long hence you will have to meet death, that mighty conqueror death. There is only one thing strong enough to be antagonistic to death—you must take it out of God's armoury—"Love is strong as death."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 5th series, p. 267.

Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God."

LOVE of Relations and Friends.

There have been men before now who have supposed Christian love was so diffusive as not to admit of concentration upon individuals, so that we ought to love all men equally.

And many there are who, without bringing forward any theory, yet consider practically that the love of many is something superior to the love of one or two, and neglect the charities of private life while busy in the schemes of expansive benevolence or of effecting a general union and conciliation among Christians. Now I shall here maintain, in opposition to such notions of Christian love, with our Saviour's pattern before me, that the best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us.

I. It has been the plan of Divine providence to ground what is good and true in religion and morals on the basis of our good natural feelings. What we are towards our earthly friends in the instincts and wishes of our infancy, such we are to become at length towards God and man in the extended field of our duties as accountable beings. To honour our parents is the first step towards honouring God, to love our brethren according to the flesh the first step towards considering all men our brethren. The love of our private friends is the only preparatory exercise for the love of all men. By trying to love our relations and friends, by submitting to their wishes, though contrary to our own, by bearing with their infirmities, by overcoming their occasional waywardness by kindness, by dwelling on their excellences and trying to copy them—thus it is that we form in our hearts that root of charity which, though small at first, may, like the mustard seed, at last even overshadow the earth.

II. Further, that love of friends and relations which nature prescribes is also of use to the Christian in giving form and direction to his love of mankind at large, and making it intelligent and discriminating. By laying a good foundation of social amiableness, we insensibly learn to observe a due harmony and order in our charity; we learn that all men are not on a level, that the interests of truth and holiness must be religiously observed, and that the Church has claims on us before the world. Those who have not accustomed themselves to love their neighbours whom they have seen will have nothing to lose or gain, nothing to grieve at or rejoice in, in their larger plans of benevolence. Private virtue is the only sure foundation of public virtue; and no national good is to be expected (though it may now and then accrue) from men who have not the fear of God before their eyes.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 51.

REFERENCES: iv. 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 26; J. Keble,

Sermons for Sundays after Trinity, Part I., p. 223. iv. 7, 8.—M. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 72.

Chap. iv., vers. 7-10.

Love is of God; God is Love.

I. "Love is of God." This does not mean merely that love comes from God and has its source in God, that He is the Author or Creator of it. All created things are of God, for by Him all things were made, and on Him they all depend. But love is not a created thing; it is a Divine property, a Divine affection; and it is of its essence to be communicative and begetting, to communicate itself and, as it were, beget its own likeness. "Love is of God." It is not merely of God as every good gift is of God. It is of God as being His own property, His own affection, His own love. (1) None but one born of God can thus love with the love which in this sense is of God; therefore one who so loves must needs be one who is born of God. (2) Being born of God implies knowing God. It is a knowledge of God altogether peculiar, belonging exclusively to the relation constituted by, and realised in, your being born of God. It is the very knowledge of God which His Son has—His only-begotten Son, whom He sent into the world to manifest His love.

II. Every one that loveth knoweth God; he that loveth not knoweth not God: these are the antagonistic statements. The fact of a man not loving plainly proves that he knows not God; and his not knowing God explains and accounts for the fact of his not loving. How, indeed, can he know God—know Him as being love? To know God thus, as being love, implies some measure of congeniality, sympathy, and fellowship. There must be community of heart and nature between Him and me. I must be "born of God." (1) We are to love as He loves His only-begotten Son. Our thus loving Him is one primary criterion and touchstone of our being born of God. (2) Then we are to love, as God loves it and because God loves it, the world which He sent His Son to save. We are to love thus one another, with what intensity of longing, like God's own longing and yearning, for one another's salvation, that all may turn and live.

R. S. Candlish, *Lectures on First John*, Part III., p. 104.

References: iv. 7-10.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. viii., p. 219. iv. 7-11.—N. Beach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 178. iv. 7-16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 444.

Chap. iv., ver. 8.—"God is love."

I. In perfect love there are three elements, which may best be seen by examining the three states of life in which they are respectively most prominent: the filial; the fraternal; the parental. (1) The first form of love in the history of each of us is that of a child to his parent, and, as a rule, it is the weakest form; but it contains and exhibits in an exceptional degree the first and essential element in all true love: reverential trustfulness. (2) But with the passing away of childhood a new need dawns upon the spirit of man: the wish to be one in whom others can rest, as he finds rest in them; the need for reciprocity of affection, such as is found in a brother, a friend, a wife. It is this reciprocity that is, in the common opinion, the chief characteristic of love; and as in all natural reciprocity, so too here, the more distinct are the elements, the closer is the union; and in ordinary cases and for ordinary men, therefore, the love of friend is closer than the love of brother, and the love of woman than the love of friend. (3) And yet there is a height above the reciprocity of wedded love. "Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends," which I have called parental love, or the parental element in love, because, again speaking of the average of cases and the average of men, it is in parents that such love is oftenest and earliest seen. Such, then, are the three elements which go to make up love, reverence, desire, sacrifice, inextricably intertwined into a new something which is none of them, and yet all of them together—the whiteness of the prism, the trinity in unity of love.

II. Consequently, if God is love, that love must exist and be exhibited as possessing in fulness this trinity of elements; and if to dwell in love is to dwell in God, that love in which we dwell must have its full development, and we must pass in our spiritual history from trust through desire to sacrifice, just as in our natural history we pass from filial through wedded to parental love. "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God." Then, but not till then, will love enter upon its highest stage, and put on the crown of sacrifice; for sacrifice is the language of love, its only adequate expression, the last effort of the spirit whom no union with the object of its love can satisfy short of the self-annihilation that shall make that object all in all. This is a goal very far from us, the love of saints, the love of the men whom God in His turn reverences; but it has been realised by one and another lonely soul along the ages, living afar upon the mountains in

the air we cannot breathe, to remind us that after all sacrifice is an element in love, and an element that will be present in proportion as love is stronger—that if God is love, there must be eternal sacrifice in Him, and that we cannot dwell in love without partaking of that sacrifice.

J. R. ILLINGWORTH, *Sermons*, p. 130.

THE Revelation of God's Love the Distinctive Characteristic of the Gospel.

What has Christianity done to make good its claim to the proud title of *the* Gospel—the one good message of glad tidings to mankind?

I. It were easy to enumerate many eminent social blessings, many conspicuous instances of individual happiness, which can be traced distinctly to the Christian dispensation as their only authentic source; but if I were asked to name what is its greatest gift of all, I should say unhesitatingly that it is the unveiling of the face of our Father who is in heaven—the revelation, all the more pregnant and influencing from the way in which it was made, that "God is love."

II. God, having spoken in time past partially and variously by the prophets, in the last days, when the time was full, spoke unto the world by His Son. The darkness passed away; the true light shone: the day broke, and the shadows fled away. One who had lived under that darkness and felt it, described in vivid and emphatic language the change that came over the spirit of his mind when, as one of the Israel of God, he found himself blessed with light in his dwelling. Christ, says Clement of Rome, was taught His message of glad tidings by the Father, and the Apostles were taught theirs by Christ. The Gospel was not only an atonement: it was a revelation. Not only was God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, but God also was in Christ making Himself known unto the world. The Son, by whom He spoke to men in the last days, was the "brightness of His glory and the express image of His person."

III. The doctrine of the love of God when imbibed, not speculatively or conventionally, but really and practically, not as the badge of a party, but as a conviction of the soul, is little liable to perversion. Antinomianism in a religious mind seems to me to be an impossible moral phenomenon. For whom are we more likely to obey—one whom we love, and whom we know to love us, or one whom we simply fear? Who renders the

more willing service—a son or a slave? Surely, under a law of liberty, all obedience freely paid becomes by that very freedom more hearty, more trustworthy, more true.

BISHOP FRASER, *University Sermons*, p. 288.

REFERENCES: iv. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 157; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 327; J. J. S. Perowne, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 109; *Homilist*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 333; F. Wagstaff, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 398; J. Baldwin Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 328; F. W. Farrar, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 385; E. Hatch, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 385; G. W. McCree, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvi., p. 182. iv. 8-12.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 106.

Chap. iv., vers. 8, 16.

I. GOD is love. The text takes us up, as it were, above the veil; we are caught up through the door of this vision to the sanctuary of God's throne. We are suffered to know something, not of His working only, but of His being. We are led to the fountain of all good and joy. And that fountain is this, says St. John: "God is love." Is there not something to grasp, to embrace, in these words, "God is love," when within the glory of the Godhead we see the revealed love of God for God, the infinite, embosomed tenderness of the Eternal Son to the Eternal Father? Yes, there is something here which meets the human soul in its longings more lovingly, more warmly, than the God of mere philosophy, the God of mere Deism, the God of man's own inventing. In revealing the truth of the Trinity, God does much more than show to us an abstract doctrine: He unveils to us Himself.

II. God is love. Such is the fountain, worthy of its stream. This love of the being of God came forth unasked, unmerited, in the love of His actings. He, this God, loved the world, so loved it that He gave His only-begotten Son for the sinner's life. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Here is indeed the point of contact between the sublime truth of the Holy Trinity and the humblest, smallest, most trying claims which one poor, suffering human being may lay upon another, if this other is a Christian, a child and servant of this God. Here descends this great ladder of light from the throne above all heavens to the stones of the desert road. If God is this God, if this God hath thus loved us, then we cannot own His tenderness to us, we cannot see this glorious depth of lovableness in Himself, and yet remain cool, calculating,

and selfish in our thoughts and wills towards our suffering brethren.

H. C. G. MOULE, *Christ is All*, p. 151.

REFERENCES: iv. 10.—C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 15; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 268; R. Tuck, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 69. iv. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1707.

Chap. iv., ver. 11.—"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

SACRIFICE and Service.

I. The sacrifice of love. It is of this that St. John speaks when he says, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us." True, the visible world teems with illustrations of God's love, but this surpasses them all; true, our houses are filled with proofs of God's love, but this transcends them all. For "herein is love, not that we loved God." No: we had apostatised from Him; we had cast off His allegiance; we were in arms against Him; yet in this was manifested the love of God, that He gave His Son for us. Love, then, was the great mission of our Redeemer, to restore, reclaim, sanctify, save. And that love is the theme of the song which St. John heard in heaven, and which he calls a new song, the language of redeemed men. It was never heard there till the soul of Abel, the first martyr for God, leaving its murdered body on the field below, came up and sang it alone, and every harp was hushed to hear. And we, too, can share this song of love now. It will not sound like presumption from our lips. We are come to the innumerable company of angels; we, though still on earth, stand within the circle of salvation, and join in the everlasting song. They understand its meaning better; they utter it out of a fuller heart, and with a deepened gratitude. Not so many are the drops of dew at night that distil on every plant, not so many the blades of grass that quiver on ten thousand fields, not so many the particles of golden light that flood the world, as God's thoughts of love toward us in the gift of His Son. And Christ has given us the grandest example of sacrifice, for "He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

II. Out of sacrifice flows service. For such service as this we live in days of wonderful opportunities. Opportunities come to all. Like the stones, they lie at our feet; and he shall gather most who stoops the lowest, like Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to "give His life a ransom for many." Our responsibilities will be measured by our capacity to do good. Many indeed and splendid are the

opportunities of service in our day. Never was the Church so powerful in numbers, in wealth, in influence, in organisation. There is a work for every man and woman, and a place for every little child. What we want is more quiet consecration in all our work, more of the spirit of love in all our religion.

J. FLEMING, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 723.

REFERENCES: iv. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 145. iv. 13.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 36. iv. 14.—*Ibid.*, p. 127; G. S. Barrett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 305; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 259.

Chap. iv., ver. 16.—"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

I. GOD is love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." So we read in an earlier verse. It is worth noticing who it was through whom the Holy Spirit spoke these words. St. John is the writer in the New Testament to whom the Church gave the title by pre-eminence of the divine, the theologian, the Apostle in whose mind dwelt more than in others his Master's deeper sayings as to Divine things, who set forth the doctrinal aspect of the Christian revelation more than others. He understood and explained more clearly than others the true Divine nature of Christ. Theology is the knowledge—if such a term is possible or lawful in such a relation—the scientific knowledge—that is, the methodised and exact knowledge—of the things of God. It seems, it is often treated as, a matter purely for the intellect, for study, thought, and reading. The words of the greatest of theologians, of him to interpret whose words is the highest task of the greatest of uninspired theologians, give us a new view of the limits within which this is true: "He that loveth not knoweth not God." Surely that sentence is a key to a great deal. It makes us understand why St. John was the divine. The loving nature was the most receptive. The disciple whom Jesus loved was the one who loved Jesus; and, therefore, he understood his Master best.

II. "God is love; he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." See the words once more as setting forth the Divine ideal of human life—he that dwelleth in love, as in a home, as the atmosphere in which he can breathe and live, without which he would die. They describe in their full sense a few rare souls: the St. John of the apostolic age, the Francis of Assisi of the Middle Ages; but they describe also

an ideal of life, a hope, a principle, not beyond the aspirations and efforts of all of us. Perhaps the "life of love" sounds to us too lofty and presumptuous a title. It seems to imply a fervour of feeling which we shrink from claiming for ourselves even in hope and aim. It is this instinct, not, surely, an improper one, which makes us prefer rather when we are speaking of our own ideal, and even of beautiful human lives that we have known, the phrase which I used just now: the unselfish life. It is a negative phrase, but as a moral guide it helps us even more than the positive one, for it suggests to us what it is that is the great drawback, the great rival, in the way of the life of love. Love is God's gift to us, to all of us; it springs spontaneously in every human heart; it is as natural to a child as to breathe. And God gives us objects for love, and He changes and widens them, leads us on from circle to circle, helping us at every stage at once to look further and to feel more deeply.

III. We are God's children; and He has given us of His Spirit, so that it comes naturally to us in a sense to love—to love even as He loves, unselfishly, instinctively. It is not a new affection to be painfully won for ourselves, if such a thing were possible. Yet it must be cherished. The world kills it; it preaches selfishness to us in every form and through every channel, laughs at enthusiasm, bids us distrust, despair, think first of ourselves; and still more surely our own selfish nature would kill it. It is something, some help, to remember now and then what God has told us: how beautiful, how Divine, that simple affection of loving is, the best thing in life, the most like God, that which puts us at once in sympathy with Him, makes it possible for us to understand Him, makes a link between us and Him which no ignorance or mistake can wholly break. Every kind, thoughtful, affectionate act, every unselfish thought for others, is dear to God. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." God make us all dwell in Him!

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 132.

Chap. iv., ver. 16.—"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

THE Soul Dwelling in God.

These words embody one of the manifold aspects of the Christian ideal. They suggest the inwardness and exaltation of the Christian life.

I. The love dwelling in which is one with dwelling in

God is not any love; it is not all that passes by the name of love; it is that love only which has been poured forth in Christ for the salvation of the world. There rises overhead and around the Christian soul the vision, the thought and memory, of the love of God in Christ. It is a real home for the spirit, a real dwelling-place for thought. It is joy, strength, and new life to let the feelings of the heart flock to it.

II. The love in which in this way the soul finds a home is much more than an object of thought: it is life, power, law as well; it is the life that stirs at the heart of Providence, the power that causes all things to work together for good, the unseen law behind events which Christian faith searches for, and in which at last, in sunshine and cloud, it rests.

III. It is not enough to know that a soul, by meditation and trust, can dwell in love; how should its dwelling in love be at the same time a dwelling in God? The love is really God manifest; the love which is a wall of fire around us is nothing other than God. He that dwells in love dwells in that which is the life of God; he has come into a world whose sunlight is Divine, where Divine paths open before the feet, where Divine love breathes in the air and fills the hollows of life as a sea.

IV. The life we are called to imitate was the fulfilment of this very ideal. Christ dwelt in God. His earthly, human life was, so to speak, a life immersed in the life of God. It is to no unrealised ideal, therefore, that we are pointed when we are called to dwell in God.

V. The elements in Christ's life which reveal this dwelling of the soul in God are present, however dimly, in all Christian life. They are—(1) insight and (2) power.

VI. The soul who is dwelling in love is, up to the measure of his indwelling, already in possession of the future. The blessedness which awaits us in the future is but the unfolding of the present life of the soul.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 240.

THE Love of God in the Atonement.

I. The mission of Christ to redeem and save mankind is not indeed here for the first time connected with the love of the Triune God. It is uniformly in Scripture traced up to that principle as its supreme ultimate source. The Saviour's Passion is always declared to be a demonstration of the Father's charity to man, and the apprehension of it by faith is every-

where bound up with the shedding abroad of that love by the Holy Ghost in the heart. But the peculiarity of our text, the last revelation on the subject, is that these three are brought together in the most impressive and affecting manner. The Persons of the Holy Trinity shed their distinct mediatorial glory on the work of our salvation.

II. "We love Him because He first loved us." By constantly keeping alive in our hearts the memorials of Christ's dying charity, celebrating there an eternal sacrament, we must nourish our love to the God of all grace. There is no duty more binding, none that we so much forget. Here is the secret of all spiritual strength. "The love of Christ constraineth us," suppressing every alien affection and growing by its own internal constraining influence. The true Christian lives, and moves, and has his being in love, the love awakened by redemption.

III. God's love is the agent of our holiness, and makes us perfect in love. It is, in the administration of the Spirit, the energy that carries us onward to perfection; and all the glory is His. Thus the indwelling presence of the Spirit proves its power; the God of atoning charity perfects the operation of His love within us. It accomplishes all His will; it strengthens obedience unto perfection; it expels every sinful affection, rendering entire the consecration of the heart; and it raises the new nature to a full conformity to Christ and preparation for heaven.

W. B. POPE, *Sermons and Charges*, p. 193.

REFERENCES: iv. 16.—G. Gilfillan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 4; W. M. Statham, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 248; H. Goodwin, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 329; S. Leathes, *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 80; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 253. iv. 16-18.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 341. iv. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons to Children*, p. 148; *Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 358.

Chap. iv., vers. 17, 18.

THE Fear of Death.

I. Is not the bondage to the fear of death the one heavy burden of life? I do not mean that the fear of our own individual death is a constantly present fear. It may but seldom occur consciously to the mind. But though the prospect and the thought be banished, the bondage abides still. The hunger of a soul is felt, though the attention be distracted from its existence. A life occupied only upon the things which perish feels resting heavily upon it a burden; and that burden is the bondage to the fear of death. The weariness of a worldly

life is in part bodily and mental fatigue, but it is more than this: it is the protest of a spirit which was meant for other things. To have forgotten death, to have put it out of sight, out of our reckoning, is itself the completest death. The enemy is not to be conquered by closing the eyes upon him. He is a conqueror, who is only to be cast out by another conqueror.

II. St. John in our text declares that fear has a conqueror's power; it can inflict torment. It is a power which requires another stronger power to exorcise it. This power of grace is "perfect love." In this Epistle St. John does not speak vaguely and sentimentally about love. He connects it directly with God's goodness to us, and with our duties as children of the Father. And as love grows, fear, the fear that has torment—the fear, that is, of finding Him a God of hate in the next world whom we have found, by blessed experience, to be a God of love in this—becomes no longer tenable. It is forced out of the soul by the spreading roots of affection and trust, for while it abides it is the lingering shadow of unfaithfulness. Love is not the grace which has made obedience superfluous; it is a feeling which, like Aaron's serpent, has swallowed up all the rest, which has taken up into itself, absorbed, duty and obedience, as unconscious and spontaneous offerings of the will.

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 101.

Chap. iv., ver. 18.—"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

I. WE can scarcely conceive how anything could live in such a world as this that had not the element of fear. For surely every part of life, not alone of the human family, but down to the lowest animated particles, has to struggle for its existence. One of the strangest things in the organisation of this world is the prevalence of a universal destructiveness. We are taught, and we believe, that God is a God of benevolence. We are taught, and we believe, that the world was ordained for the production of happiness. And yet, when the Apostle says that "the whole creation groans and travails in pain until now," every one who is conversant with history says, "Amen." Every one who looks out into life and takes cognisance of the things that are going on—the silent sufferings, the secret mischiefs, the wastes, and the wails that spread throughout the

whole human family—every such one must feel that that which has been is, and will be.

II. Fear was the lowest and earliest condition in the human development. As men rise in knowledge and virtue, they lose the need of fear. It still remains; it may exist in some external relations as long as we live upon the globe; but, in regard to our affections and moral sentiments, that fear which is indispensable in the development of a higher life grows less and less. Men take the first steps in their development because they fear; but afterwards their development is carried on by other influences. Civilisation progresses from a state of fear toward a state of tranquillity. It works through a realm of the lower appetites and passions, filled with pain, up toward a condition in which peace, and tranquillity, and quiet predominate, and are the characteristic elements. As society develops and as men grow stronger and larger, terrors cease, and the impact of overwhelming fear becomes less and less frequent. But fear is not gone. It has taken on a latent form. That is, it has associated itself with other faculties. It acts now as an auxiliary to all the different feelings. In the beginning it acts by itself, but by-and-by it acts with the higher qualities of the mind; and then come all the solicitudes and vigilances of love, for fear working with love produces vigilance and solicitude. Fear and love acting in conjunction create apprehensiveness. Blended together, they go to make a state of mind not without its charm, and oftentimes quite indispensable to the purposes of life.

III. And when at last men have, by culture and training, passed out of the lower and voluntary states into the higher and involuntary ones; when habits have been formed, and have clustered themselves into groups, covering the whole circle of the mind, so that character is the result; when pain has done its work, and men are set upon that which is right because they love right, and not because they are afraid of penalty; when fear has wrought out its negative fruits, and inspired such growth that men come to the positive side, and love brightness because the sense of brightness is gratified, and love truth because there is that in them which is attracted by truth, and seek goodness with their whole social and moral being, because they are so lifted up that they hunger and thirst for it, then fear has no longer any function. Now they have risen to such a state of purity, and of beneficence, and of likeness to God that they live in a higher sphere and on a nobler plane, and work by the positive attractions of good, and not by the fear of

the mischiefs of evil. But this is a long course. It is the final result. It is not the beginning, but the ending, of our training in life.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 212.

I. CONSIDER the truth, "There is no fear in love." There is no fear (1) of God's majesty. God's grandeur gives not birth to dread within the Christian's soul. There is enough majesty to overawe a universe, but not too much for the weakest saint to joy in. He knows his God, and love has cast out fear. Nor is he afraid (2) of Divine power. Though he knows that God's right hand hath omnipotence, yet does he not dread its power. Nay, it is just because God has unlimited power that he triumphs in Him. The very might of God, instead of being a thought to crush with terror, becomes one of the themes of his daily song. (3) There will be no dread, either, in approaching Him in prayer. The soul that is filled with love cannot come to God trembling like a slave. It comes with reverential, but delightful, awe; it comes with its spirit bowed, and oftentimes with its face veiled with shame, yet with holy confidence.

II. Let us seek to know a little more of this by experience. The sad thing is that there are so many who seem content with a low, dull level of mediocrity in love for Christ. How few there are who seem to climb the mount of love until they attain a sublime position. Let us daily ask the Lord to cause love to Him to become an all-absorbing passion, until this text shall be true in our own experience.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 1088.

FEAR and Love.

I. Scripture assigns to fear a considerable place in the apparatus, so to speak, of religious motives and forces. Fear of punishment, either as imminent or distant, is not a false or bad principle of action in its own place and for its own time. It is appropriate for the earlier stage of spiritual training. It is commonly called "servile"; but until a soul can realise its sonship the servant's position is the one which it must occupy, and it has, at any rate, the assurance of bread enough for present needs. Bishop Andrewes, alluding to fear, observes that it is "as the base-court to the temple"; and adds that a man must do his duty "for fear of punishment, if he cannot get himself to do it for love of righteousness." So long as we are still under probation, there must be the possibility of ultimate failure even on the part

of the grey-haired saint, as Bunyan in his dream saw that there was a way to hell from the gate of heaven as well as from the City of Destruction, as before now men have fallen from God at their very last hour, as once, according to a most impressive story, an all-but martyr became through unforgivingness an apostate. And that possibility involves a fear which dwells not on the mere pain of future punishment, but on that which is the essential and central misery of hell: the forfeiture of the life-giving love of God.

II. A religion which professes to dispense with this kind of fear, on the ground that Christianity has discarded it as a permanent motive and that rational piety involves an assurance which makes it needless, may be very attractive and become widely popular, but it is not the religion of Scripture and the Church. One may suspect that its estimate of sin is gravely defective. Let our fear of grieving and quenching the Spirit, of wounding the heart of Jesus Christ, of losing our place in the house of our Father, be steadfast and perpetual in companionship with love.

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 209.

Chap. iv., ver. 18.—"Perfect love casteth out fear."

I. THE Apostle here contemplates a universal dominion of fear wherever there is not the presence of active love. Of course he is speaking about the emotions which men cherish with regard to God. It is not fear and love generally that he is talking about, but it is the relation in which we stand to our Father in heaven; and of that he says universally, Those that do not love Him fear Him. Is that true? It is not difficult, I think, to establish it. (1) This universal dominion of fear rests on a universal consciousness of sin. (2) This truth is not made in the least degree doubtful by the fact that the ordinary condition of men is not one of active dread of God. There is nothing more striking than the power we have of forcing ourselves to forget, because we know that it is dangerous to remember.

II. Note the fearlessness of love, how perfect love casts out fear. Love is no weak thing, no mere sentiment. It does not ally itself most naturally with feeble natures, or with the feeble parts of a man's nature. It is the bravest of all human emotions. It makes heroes as its natural work. The spirit of love is always the spirit of power, if it be the spirit likewise of a sound mind. The love of God entering into a man's heart destroys fear. All the attributes of God come to be on our side. He that loves

has the whole Godhead for him. The love of God casts out the fear of God; the love of God casts out all other fear. Every affection makes him who cherishes it in some degree braver than he would have been without it. It is not self-reliance which makes the hero. It is having the heart filled with passionate enthusiasm, born of love for some person or for some thing. Love is gentle, but it is omnipotent, victor over all. It is the true hero, and martyr if need be, in the human heart. Note these lessons: (1) they that love ought not to fear; (2) they that fear ought to love.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons in Manchester*, vol. i., p. 200.

REFERENCES: iv. 18.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 355; G. J. Proctor, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 195; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 332; *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 84.

Chap. iv., ver. 19.—"We love Him, because He first loved us."

ORIGINATING LOVE.

The love of all who love God is a consequence of God's love to them.

I. By an act of creative power. All love in the heart is a creation; and whom God loves, in them He creates love to Him. It might be enough to see that, but we may trace the creation. First, by moral cause and effect. There is always an inclination to love those who we believe love us. If you believe God loves you, it is a sure effect that you will try to love Him; it is a part of the ordinary constitution of our nature. It is so wonderful a thing that the great God should indeed love a poor miserable sinner that whenever it is really brought home to the heart and conscience it awakens heavenly affections.

II. And now mark, it must be believed and felt. Many have a general sense of the love of God, but they cannot believe that He personally loves them; and yet till this is done nothing is done. You will not love God until you are quite sure that God specially and individually loves you.

III. But then this feeling cannot be produced by any natural process, by any reasoning whatever. Therefore the way by which God's love produces our love is altogether spiritual. Where God loves the Holy Ghost comes and shows us that love of God.

IV. Hence we arrive at the fourth reason of mutual love in a believer's heart. It is a necessity: the love of God has shone there, and it must reflect itself. And the reflection of God's love

to the soul is that soul's love—first to God, then to the Church, and then to every creature.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 188.

REFERENCES: iv. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 229; vol. xvii., No. 1008; vol. xxii., No. 1299; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 163; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 114; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 5. iv. 21.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 414. v. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 979.

Chap. v., ver. 3.—"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."

LOVE for God's Commands.

I. People talk of "going to heaven" as if admission to future happiness had nothing to do with the bent and tone of their minds and their inward being here on earth. But salvation is the consummation of that eternal life which begins for Christ's true servants in this world. This essence of eternal life is union with Him who is the Eternal, and is the Life. To possess it, in however imperfect a measure, is to be in moral fellowship with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. There is nothing arbitrary in the Divine awards. Alike for weal and for woe, there is a true continuity between a man's character as formed and settled in this world and the portion assigned to him in the next. Perdition is no vindictive infliction for bygone evil, but the inevitable, one might say the natural, result of obdurate persistency in evil, or, as it has been expressed, a free will self-fixed in obstinate refusal of God, and therefore necessarily left to itself; and salvation must similarly be the complete development of a moral and spiritual condition which may be described as the renewal of the soul by the joint operation of grace on the one hand and of responsiveness to the aid of grace on the other, which condition must at any rate have been inaugurated if the soul is to depart in what is called the state of grace. In short, we must be grateful for salvation if we would be saved.

II. And how is this to be done? By loving what God commands—that is, by putting our wills into a line with His will; by giving Him our hearts; by sympathising, if we may so speak, with His intentions towards us and for us. Thus to love what He commands is accepted by Him as in substance love for Himself.

W. BRIGHT, *The Morality of Doctrine*, p. 154.

Chap. v., ver. 4.—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

OFFICE and Province of Faith.

I. Faith is not primarily a light of the soul. Though its gaze ought ever to be fixed on the source of all light, it looks to that source rather in the first instance as being at the same time the source of all warmth and all life. It is the living principle by which the soul drinks in life from the heavenly fountain of life; and only as the recipient of the light from above does it become the light of every one in whom it shines. It is still given to Christ's disciples to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. To those who believe in Him it is given, but to those who do not believe in Him it is not given. We are to seek and search, not with our eyes half closed, as though we were fearful lest we should see too much of truth, lest we should look beyond God into a region where God is not. In this respect also, seeing that we have such a High-priest, who Himself is passed into the heavens, we may approach boldly to the temple of wisdom, for He who has delivered our hearts and souls has also delivered our minds from the bondage of earth. Therefore let no man say to the waves of thought, "Thus far shall ye go, and no farther." Let faith propel them, and they shall roll onward, and ever onward, until they fall down at the foot of the eternal throne.

II. The true antithesis is not between faith and reason, but between faith and sight, or more generally between faith and sense. The objects of faith are not the things which lie beyond the reach of reason, but the things which lie beyond the reach of sight—the things which are unseen, the things which as yet are objects of hope, and which therefore must be remote from the senses. Nor is it the office of faith to deliver man from the bondage of reason, but from the bondage of the senses, by which his reason has been deposed and enthralled, and hereby to enable him to become reason's willing, dutiful, active servant In fact, the truths which are the objects of faith are in the main the very same with those which are the objects of reason, only, while reason is content to look at them from afar, or, it may be, handles them and turns them about, or analyses and recompounds them, but after all leaves them lying in a powerless, notional abstraction, faith, on the other hand, lays hold of them and brings them home to the heart endowing them with a living reality, and nurtures itself by feeding on them, and leans on them as a staff to walk with—yea, fastens them on to the soul as wings

wherewith it may fly. Thus faith surpasses reason in power and vitality; it also anticipates reason by centuries, sometimes by millenniums. It darts at once with the speed of sight to those truths which reason can only attain to slowly, step by step, often faltering, often slumbering, often wandering by the way. When faith dies away, the heart of a nation rots; and then, though its intellect may be acute and brilliant, it is the sharpness of a weapon of death and the brightness of a devouring fire.

J. C. HARE, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 63.

THE Victory of Faith.

It is acknowledged by everybody that the world is a place of conflict; but it is not felt by everybody that there is an inestimable advantage in this: that the conditions of human life should be those of conflict. And yet, if we reflect, we shall not, I think, murmur that our lot should be cast in a world where there is every need for the putting forth of our energies, for surely it is by the stimulating influences of various oppositions that our powers will ripen and develop. Let us take such a survey of the conflict as will enable us to see that perhaps one of the reasons why there is so much complaint of failure lies in this fact: that men mistake the nature of the conflict, and as they mistake the nature of the conflict, so they mistake the nature of the weapons that should be employed.

I. They mistake, I think, the nature of the conflict. The world, they say, is a great arena of contest. It is true, and there are many foes. We may enumerate them. There is poverty, there is ignorance, there is obscurity, there is weakness; and as men take a survey of life, these are the enemies which they most dread. Of all they dread poverty as the worst. It seems to smite down man and to rob him of the powers of struggle, because it robs him of the power of hope. They dread obscurity, they dread ignorance, because if a man feels that he can only emerge into the full light, where he can be seen and can have a full, free scope for his energies, then perchance success will be his. The Apostle tells us in effect the foe is not care; the foe is not obscurity; it is not poverty. The thing which men mistake is the enemy that they have to assail, and they always will identify the real advantages of life with the things that they can see, which they can enjoy, whereas he tells us that the true enemy is not

in the world, nor in the things that are in the world, but rather that it is in the world within the heart. The enemy, he says, is not poverty, but desire; the enemy is not obscurity, but lust; and therefore he brings out and shows where the true conflict is. Here, he says, are the enemies: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"; and now I know that men may win the victory in imagination, and be defeated at the testing time. Not he who has broken through the barriers of the shade of inferiority and has found his way to the highest places of the earth, but rather he who has taken the chains of these lower things, and has broken them in pieces, and has risen out of the darkness of sin into the true light of the knowledge of purity and of God; not he who imagines that his power is sustained by men being at his feet, but he rather who has been victorious over the subtle passions of his own heart—he has overcome the world.

II. Then there is another thought; that is, the weapon is mistaken also. If, indeed, poverty is the worst of evils, obscurity the worst of enemies, ignorance the worst of foes, then by all means let us take to our aid the weapons of human warfare. I know that the weapons of industry shall overcome poverty, and I know that industry and knowledge will vanquish obscurity and bid ignorance depart; but if these are not the foes, then must we try another weapon. The Apostle bids us to try the weapon of faith. This, he says, is the victory that overcomes the world. Take rather this weapon in hand, and the triumph shall be yours—even your faith. At the essential root of all human life the measure of human success lies often in the spirit of confidence and faith. Therefore in the world of religion and in the great world—for religion, after all, is only the art of living nobly and well—this will be the victory that shall overcome the world, even our faith.

BISHOP BOYD-CARPENTER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 321.

FAITH'S Conquest.

That there is a contest carried on in creation between opposite principles was so apparent even to the heathen that many of them imagined the existence of two opposite deities, the one dealing out good and the other engaged in counteracting that good. We who have the Divine revelation know better than this. We know that a fierce conflict goes on between evil and good, but that only good can be referred to the Creator, evil originating exclusively with the creature. This

earth, which God designed for the habitation of an innocent, and therefore happy, race, has been converted, through the apostacy of that race, into a battle plain, upon which Satan and his emissaries measure their strength with Jehovah and His hosts. The contest between Christ and Satan is a contest for the souls of men, and its battles are fought on the narrow stage of individual hearts more frequently than on the wide area of nations and provinces.

I. It is asserted here that the renewed man overcometh the world. We must take a modified interpretation of St. John's strong sayings. The renewed man "overcomes," and the renewed man "does not sin," in the sense of the object which he has in view, rather than of the end to which he has attained. The sayings are to be interpreted of what is habitual, not of what is occasional. His habits are those of victory and righteousness. When he fails to conquer or falls from obedience, the failure and fall are exceptions to ordinary success and general steadfastness. Hence we may say, the renewed man overcomes because, though sometimes defeated, to be the victor, and not the vanquished, is his habit.

II. And now as to the agency by which this result is effected. Faith overcometh the world. In general it is worse than useless to concede to the world. The world very justly takes it for cowardice and gives it contempt. And this faith decides that the march of a righteous cause is not to be advanced by throwing a mantle over the uniform of its soldiers. It decides that they who would hate you if you showed yourself an out-and-out Christian can only love you in proportion as you play the renegade and buffoon. Thus by faith in the whole record of Scripture, by faith in the fact that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, by faith in Christ as able to effect the spread of the Gospel without requiring me to disguise it in myself, by faith in the Holy Spirit as ready to support me against all obloquy which absolute decision may provoke, I overcome the world; I resist its advances; I decline its courtesy; I reject its alliance. When a man is not afraid of standing out to be pointed at; when he will make no terms but that the world shall come over to his ground, that he will perish rather than advance one inch towards the world, then we affirm that a great victory has been achieved, and so pre-eminent has faith been in the conflict that at once we may declare with St. John, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2015.

Power of Faith among the Heathen and among the Jews.

I. God did not leave Himself without a witness on earth. He would not so forsake mankind as that there should not be a single eye of faith to look up to Him among all the nations, that there should not be a single altar, a single heart, from which prayer, and thanksgiving, and praise should mount to heaven. When the whole world was turning away from Him to enwrap itself in its own natural darkness, He called Abraham to be the father of them that believe, and promised that from him in the course of ages should spring One through faith in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Thus did God ordain that faith should overcome the world. When man had given himself up to the worship of the creature, of the earth and its fruits, of the flesh and its lusts, God said, I will light up the light of faith in the heart of Abraham.

II. The faith which was a living principle in the hearts of the Jews, and which manifested itself so often by heroic action and endurance—nay, which became so inwrought in them that seventeen centuries of dispersion and oppression have not been able to destroy it—was a faith in Jehovah as the God of their fathers and their own God, who in manifold wonderful ways had shown Himself to be the Protector of their fathers, and who had chosen them out from all the nations of the earth to be His peculiar people. The heathen never discerned that God was a God of holiness and justice; at least, their popular religion was often at direct variance with any recognition of this truth. To the Jews it had been declared and fully displayed, although they were perpetually blinding their hearts to it. Along with the historical groundwork of their faith, they had a law, by keeping which they were to show forth their faith; and every commandment in that law was, as it were, a fresh step towards overcoming the world. In reading the law, indeed, there was often a veil upon their hearts; often, too, they turned the law itself into a veil, the letter of which darkened and concealed its spirit. The Jews could trust in God, and could act nobly and boldly in that trust; for a high degree of such trust may exist apart from that earnest endeavour after righteousness which ought to go along with it. But few of them lived by faith: only the just can so live; and they alone who do live by faith can be just. Even those who were strongest in their faith or trust in God's upholding and protecting providence, and who by this faith were enabled in outward act to overcome the world to vanquish the most

formidable outward enemies it could bring against them, even those who were full of this lively, animating trust, and who in this trust encountered and overthrew every obstacle—even they could yet at times fall woefully and appallingly. The revelation made to the Jews was incomplete, and so it was seldom adequate to produce anything like a faith which will overcome the world.

J. C. HARE, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 151.

POWER of Faith in Man's Natural Life.

If Christian faith has often been represented as a totally new quality, a gift of the Spirit, to which there is nothing analogous in the unregenerate man, this has arisen in great measure from the notion that faith is mere belief. For such faith being notoriously powerless, they who felt the inadequateness of such faith for the office assigned to it in the Christian scheme of salvation might naturally infer that the faith which is to be the living root of the Christian life must be something wholly and essentially different from any form of belief discoverable in the natural man. And so in truth it is. Whereas, if the business of faith be in all men equally to lift up the heart and the will, as well as the understanding, from things seen to things unseen, and to draw us away from the impulses of the present moment to the objects of hope held out by the future, to supply us with higher principles, and motives, and aims of action than those with which the senses pamper and drug us, then assuredly may the whole of man's life, so far as he is a being raised above the beasts of the field, be called a school and exercise and discipline of faith.

I. To take one of the simplest daily examples, when we lie down on our beds at night, we lie down in faith: we believe and trust that the dew of sleep will fall on our heavy eyes, and will bathe our weary limbs, and will refresh them and brace them anew. Again, when we rise in the morning and betake ourselves to our daily task, we rise and set to our task in faith: we believe and trust that the light will abide its wonted time in the sky, and that we may, each according to his station, go forth to our labour and to our work until the evening. And whatsoever that work may be, each step in it must rest on the ground of faith. Faith is absolutely indispensable to man even when he is dealing with outward things, in order to make them minister to his sustenance and outward well-being.

II. A child cannot learn his alphabet, cannot learn the name

of anything, cannot learn the meaning of any word, except through faith. He must believe before he can know. That which is the law of our intellectual being at all stages of our progress in knowledge is most evidently so in the first stage. If the child did not believe his teachers, if he distrusted or doubted them, he could never learn anything. In like manner, the whole edifice of our knowledge must stand on the rock of faith, or it may be swallowed up at any moment, as has been seen in the history of philosophy, by the quicksands of scepticism. Faith, too, must be the cement whereby all its parts are bound together each to each, or a blast of wind will scatter them. Every fresh accession of knowledge requires fresh exercises of faith: faith in evidence; faith in the criterions and in the faculties by which that evidence is to be tried. Faith, too, is indispensable as the motive principle whereby alone we can be impelled to seek after knowledge. We must have seen in the visions of faith that our Rachel is beautiful and well-favoured; thus alone shall we be willing to serve seven years for her, which years will then seem but a few days for the love we bear to her.

J. C. HARE, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 103.

FAITH a Practical Principle.

I. Nothing can be more fallacious than the notion that faith is not a practical principle. Were faith nothing more than the assent of the understanding, then, indeed, we should be forced to grant that it is not a practical principle. But this consequence of itself is enough to prove how totally inadequate that definition of faith must be. In truth, if we look thoughtfully through the history of the Church, or even of the world, we shall find that this, under one shape or other, has ever been the main principle and spring of all great and magnanimous action, even faith. The persons in whose character love has been the predominant feature have not seldom been disposed to rest in heavenly meditations and contemplations. Unless, too, it be corrected and nerved by faith, love shrinks from giving pain and giving offence. But the great, stirring motive spirits in the history of the world, the angels who have excelled in strength, and who have done God's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word, have been those who may be called the heroes of faith, those who by faith have dwelt in the immediate presence of God. By giving a substantial reality to that which is invisible, to that which is no object of the senses or of the natural understanding, and by animating the heart with an unshakable assurance of

that for which it looks in hope, faith performs the task assigned to her of overcoming the world.

II. Bearing this in mind, we perceive how every act of faith, as the act of a man's whole personality, will be single, and that there is no confusion of thought, no mixing up of incongruous elements, in saying that it is not the act of the understanding alone, but of the understanding and still more emphatically and essentially of the will. If it were the act of the understanding alone, it would be the act of a fraction of a man's being. Only as the act of the will mainly and primarily is it the act of a man's whole being. The primary, germinal act must be that of the will, not of the understanding. There must be some motion of the will, however slight, which in the first instance directs the application of the understanding to an object before that object can be introduced through the understanding to act upon the will. Hereby we may be assisted in some degree to conceive how the influences of the Spirit should be of such momentous power in the work of our faith, in producing it from the very first and afterward in nourishing and maturing it. Were faith merely an act of the understanding, it would be without that region which is the peculiar sphere of the spirit. So far, however, as faith is a spiritual act, so far as it is the act of the will, which Christ came to redeem from the bondage of the flesh, we may feel assured that in every act of spiritual faith, in every act by which we evince a desire to become partakers in Christ's redeeming grace, to shake off the yoke of corruption, and to strive after the glorious liberty of the children of God—in every such act, we may feel assured, the Spirit of God will be working along with our spirits.

J. C. HARE, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 32.

REFERENCES: v. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 14; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 332; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii, p. 351; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 209; E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 243; T. J. Crawford, *The Preaching of the Cross*, p. 135; Fleming, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 29; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 221; A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 105; H. P. Liddon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 241; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 243; J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascensiontide*, p. 201.

Chap. v., vers. 4, 5.

FILIAL Faith overcomes the World.

I. The indefiniteness, the sort of unsatisfactory vagueness, that is sometimes felt to attach to the Scriptural idea of the

world, is here somewhat obviated by the connection or train of thought in which it occurs. What is the world which faith overcomes? It is whatever system or way of life, whatever society or companionship of men, tends to make us feel God's commandments, or any of them, to be grievous. If this is a true account of the world as here presented to us, it must be very evident that it is a world to be overcome. We cannot deal with it, if we would avoid its deleterious and deadly influence, in any other way. The world cannot be shunned, neither can it be conciliated. The only effectual, the only possible, way is to overcome it. And the manner of overcoming it must be peculiar. It must be such as thoroughly to meet and obviate that tendency to minister to a rebellious frame of mind which constitutes the chief characteristic, and indeed the very essence, of what is here called the world.

II. Two explanations, accordingly, of this overcoming of the world are given, the one having reference to the original source, the other to the continued following out, of the victory. (1) "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." So the victory begins; that is its seed or germ. And as to its seed or germ it is complete, potentially complete, though not so in actual result fully and in detail. Being born or begotten of God implies the overcoming of the world. There is that in our being born or begotten of God which secures, and which alone can secure, our overcoming the world. And what can that be but the begetting in us of a frame of mind which cuts up by the roots the whole strength of the world's hold over us—the idea, namely, of God's commandments being grievous? (2) This implies faith, and faith in constant and lively exercise. Our overcoming the world is not an achievement completed at once, and once for all, in our being begotten of God. It is a lifelong business, a prolonged and continuous triumph in a prolonged and continuous strife. Our being born of God does, indeed, give us the victory; it puts us in the right position and endows us with the needful power for overcoming the world: but we have still before us the work of actually from day to day, all our life long in point of fact, overcoming the world; and it is by faith that we do so.

R. S. CANDLISH, *Lectures on First John*, vol. ii., p. 186.

CHRISTIAN Faith.

Christian faith has this advantage over simple religious faith, in the more general sense of the word: that, having obtained

clearer and fuller notions of God's perfections, it is rendered stronger and more triumphant over temptations.

I. Christian faith, or the faith that Jesus is the Son of God, gives us so much clearer and fuller notions of God that it makes us know both Him and ourselves and love Him far better than we could do without it. If the Christian turns to the temptations of the world, and casts the eye of faith towards that future and unseen recompense which is promised him, he bethinks him at what price it was purchased for him, and by what infinite love it was given; he feels, on the one hand, how worthless must be his own efforts to buy that which only the blood of the Son of God could buy, yet, on the other hand, with what zealous hope he may labour, sure that God is mightily working in him, giving him an earnest will and strengthening him to do steadily what he has willed sincerely. This, then, is a faith that overcometh the world, for it is a faith that looks to an eternal reward, and which is founded on such a display of God's love and holiness that the Christian may well say, "I know in whom I have believed."

II. The means of gaining this faith are principally three: reading the Scriptures, prayer, and a partaking of the Lord's Supper. You see what it is that is wanted—namely, to make notions wholly remote from your common life take their place in your minds as more powerful than the things of common life, to make the future and the unseen prevail over what you see and hear now around you. Faith will come by reading, as of old time it came by hearing; and when we have thus become familiar with Christ, have learned to love Him and to know that He not only was, but is now, a living object of our love, the prospect of being with Him for ever will not seem like a vague promise of we know not what, but a real, substantial pleasure, which we would not forfeit for all the world can offer.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 8.

REFERENCES: v. 4, 5.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 231; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, 2nd series, p. 45; W. Anderson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 138.

Chap. v., ver. 6.—"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

CHRIST Coming by Water and Blood.

I. Let us settle the immediate sense of these words. There was living then at Ephesus a conspicuous and enter-

prising teacher, whom not a few were likely to regard as more profound and philosophical than St. John, who himself probably looked down with superb indulgence on the aged Galilean as pious enough in his simple way, but quite uncultured, without any speculative ability, with crude and unscriptural views of God and the universe, and wholly unfit to interpret Hebraic ideas to men who had breathed the air of Gnostic wisdom. "One confusion," he would say, "which John makes, must be most carefully avoided: you must draw a sharp distinction between Jesus and Christ. Jesus was simply a man, eminent for his wisdom and goodness, but not supernaturally born, on whom at his baptism a heavenly power called Christ descended, to use him as an instrument for revealing truth and working miracles, but to depart from him before he suffered and died." Now St. John, in the context before us, contradicts this absolutely. "The self-same Person who stooped to the waters of Jordan gave up His blood to be shed for us on Golgotha." This is He, the one, indivisible Christ, in whom to believe is to overcome the world.

II. In the "water and blood" St. John further saw a combination which seemed to present in a kind of symbolical unity the purifying and the atoning aspects of Christ's work.

III. When we hear that He came by water and blood, it is well-nigh impossible not to think of that great ordinance in which water is made the effectual sign—that is, the organ or instrument—of a new birth, and of that still greater rite which embodies for us in a concrete form the new and better covenant, and in which, as St. Augustine tersely expresses it, we "drink that which was paid for us." And thus the water and the blood, in this large and manifold application of the terms, bear witness, with the Holy Spirit, for Jesus as the Christ, for Jesus as God's own Son.

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 28.

REFERENCE: v. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 205.

Chap. v., ver. 6.—"It is the Spirit that beareth witness."

HAS CHRIST RISEN?

I. Let us ask ourselves what is the evidence with which we are supplied on the subject of the Resurrection, what is there to be said on the subject to a person who believes—I will not say in the supernatural inspiration, but in the general trustworthiness, of the writings of the first Christians. In order

to know that our Lord did really rise from the dead we have to satisfy ourselves that three distinct questions may be answered. Of these the first is this: Did Jesus Christ really die upon the cross? For if He merely fainted or swooned away, then there was no resurrection from death; then He merely recovered consciousness after an interval. The Evangelists, each one of them, say expressly that He did die; and the wonder is not that He died when He did after the three hours' agony on the cross, but that, with all His suffering at the hands of the soldiers and of the populace before His crucifixion—with all these sufferings He should have lived so long. But suppose that what looked like death on the cross was merely a fainting fit, would He have survived the wounds in His side inflicted by the soldier's lance, through which the blood yet remaining in His heart escaped? We are expressly told that the soldiers did not break His limbs, and that He was already dead; and before Pilate would allow His body to be taken down from the cross he ascertained from the centurion in command that He was already dead.

II. The second question is this: Did the disciples take our Lord's dead body out of the sepulchre? They would not have wished to do it. Why should they? What could have been their motive? They either believed in His approaching resurrection, or they did not. If they did believe in it, they would have shrunk from disturbing His grave as an act not less unnecessary than profane; if they did not believe in it, and instead of abandoning themselves to unreflecting grief, allowed themselves to think steadily, what must have been their estimate of their dead Master? They must now have thought of Him as of one who had deceived them, or who was Himself deceived. If He were not a clever impostor who had failed, He was a sincere but feeble character, who had Himself been the victim of a religious delusion. On either supposition, why should they arouse the anger of the Jews, and incur the danger of swift and heavy punishment? And once more, had they desired and dared to remove our Lord's body from its grave, such a feat was obviously beyond their power. The tomb was guarded by soldiers; every precaution had been taken by the Jews to make it secure. The great stone at the entrance could not have been rolled away without much disturbance, even if the body could have been removed without attracting attention. The character of the guards themselves was at stake. Had they countenanced or permitted any such crime, their almost inevitable detection

would have been followed by severe punishment. In after-years, you will remember, St. Peter was released from prison by an angel; and the sentinels were punished by death.

III. A third question is the following: What is the positive testimony that goes to show that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead? There is, first of all, the witness of all the Apostles. Next, there is the testimony of a large number of persons besides the Apostles. Five hundred persons could not be simultaneously deceived. Their testimony would be considered decisive as to any ordinary occurrence when men wished only to ascertain the simple truth. And the force of this flood of testimony is not really weakened by objections which do not, you will observe, directly challenge it, but which turn on accessory or subordinate points. For instance, it is said that the evangelical accounts of the Resurrection itself and of our Lord's subsequent appearance are difficult to reconcile with each other. At first sight they are, but only at first sight. In order to reconcile them, two things are necessary: first, patience; and secondly, determination to exclude everything from the narrative which does not lie in the text of the Gospels. Two-thirds of the supposed difficulties are created by the riotous imagination of the negative commentators. Scripture takes no precautions against hostile judges; Scripture speaks as might a perfectly truthful child in a court of justice, conscious only of its integrity and leaving the task, whether of criticism or of apology for what it says, entirely to others. It proceeds on the strong conviction that in the end, in this as in other matters, Wisdom is justified of her true children.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 257.

Chap. v., vers. 6-8.

THE Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.

I. Consider the testimony of the water. I believe that the reference here is exclusively to baptism—the baptism of Jesus Himself, and probably also the baptism which He instituted, and which remains as a permanent ordinance in connection with His name. This is the testimony of the water. Jesus, the Christ, came not by water only; but He did come by water. He was baptised by John in the Jordan. The importance attached by the Evangelists to the baptism of Jesus is surely not without significance. It stands on the very threshold of Christ's public ministry. It was His initiation into that ministry. It was His own open consecration of Himself to His

own great work in relation to the new era; and the signs which accompanied His baptism were, so to speak, the manifest anointing by the Father of His Son. Thus Jesus, the Christ, "came by water." His public ministry was inaugurated by a baptism, which brought with it a Divine testimony to His being the Anointed.

II. Consider the testimony of the blood. His was a baptism, not only of consecration, but of suffering. The blood-shedding of Jesus was really a testimony to His Divine Sonship; it was the price He was willing to pay for the world's redemption; it was the completion of His revelation of the Father. Not until He hung upon the cross could He say, "It is finished."

III. Consider the testimony of the Spirit. Even during His life on earth, the Spirit which manifestly shone through the character, and conduct, and works of Jesus Christ, bore witness to Him as the Anointed of the Father. But, again, this Spirit with which Jesus was anointed was a Spirit which He was also to impart. "The Spirit beareth witness" in the Church "because the Spirit is truth."

T. C. FINLAYSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 195.

Chap. v., vers. 6-11.

THE Witness of Christ.

"Witness!" The word in its emphatic recurrence in typical of the situation out of which the Epistle springs. The special perils and anxieties with which the Church is now beset are changed from those with which we are familiar in the earlier epistles of St. Paul. And it may be worth our while to remind ourselves of the contrast. There the effort had been to get the message itself of Christ out in its distinct and native force; to disentangle it from the encompassing matter that obscured or distorted it; to set it free from the misdirections to which it was liable, whether from Jewish or Gentile pressure. But now the body of believers has possessed its faith for some years; some have grown up from childhood within its familiar environment. There they stand, in compact possession of their position. But over against them they find set, in resolute hostility, a world, intellectual and moral, that will not yield—a world fierce, hard, and strong. And the task given them to do begins to look tough and grim. It will be a long business. They are but as a spot of light in the darkness that shows few signs of breaking. This "world" is, indeed, to be convinced,

convicted, converted, but not, it seems, at a stroke, not in some rapid onset of victory. A long, slow, plodding fight is evidently ahead, the end of which no eye can yet recognise. And the faith that is to face this work must look well to itself. It must have recognised how far it means to go, on what it can rely; it must be complete, and prepared, and explicit. Christians must not be afraid to look into their faith. Its early simplicity is inadequate for their task. They must unearth its roots; they must probe it and note, and sort, and distinguish. They must verify their belief. And this verification they must win out of the fact itself to which belief commits them. The fact is a living fact, and can make its own answers. By contact with it, by penetration into it, the fact will bear witness to itself.

I. How can this be? How can a fact be said to bear its own evidence with it? Well, broadly speaking, all facts, of whatever kind, to which we give internal credit do so—at least, to some degree. For the credit we give them is derived, not from the mere evidence for their having occurred, but from their harmonious correspondence with the world into which they arrive. They fit it; they belong to it; they fall in with it; they take an appropriate place amid the general body of facts. It is this luminous self-evidential character which St. John would claim for the Christian fact. Its witness to itself is to be found in its complete correspondence with the spiritual situation into which it enters. The burden of responsibility for the nature of the proof is thus thrown back upon ourselves. It operates as a judgment, detecting where we stand and laying bare the secrets of the heart. The Christian must, if he would be sure of himself in the awful war with the world, brood and pore over the Divine fact presented to him, the fact in which he had believed, until the fact itself should grow ever more luminous with the intensity and the reality of the light that it threw on the tremendous issues which lie about man's destiny here and hereafter. Ever as he so pondered the illumination would increase; and in this increase of illuminative power would lie that evidence of the fact, that intelligent and convincing assurance, which his anxiety desired.

II. And there was another form of this witness which adhered in the fact—the witness, namely, which it gave to God the Father. Not only did the Christian fact harmonise with the human situation which it claimed to explain, but it carried with it a sudden sense of correspondence with the God in whom men had believed. St. John's confidence in giving his witness of

that which he had "seen, and heard, and handled" crowns itself in the consciousness that, through the power of this experience, he found himself brought out of a dark jungle of death into the clear light of day; he saw the face of God once more, undimmed and spotless. This was what fortified and corroborated his adherence to the fact. The light had been manifested, and with this result: that the message which he had now to declare unto his hearers was just this: "that God was indeed light," and only light, nothing but light; and that in Him was no darkness at all.

III. There is a third form of this witness to the reality of the fact. It is that which is expressed in the enigmatical reference to the three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Water and blood—these are real and concrete witnesses to Him who came in the flesh. Here on earth, among us, they are still wielded, filled, possessed by the Spirit, applied by the Spirit to the perpetual proof of the purification and redemption which were once for all made manifest in Jesus Christ. Here they still are. And through this combined concord of inward with outward, of living essence with objective factors, of witnessing Spirit with the testifying water and blood, the proof is decisively given both of the presence and power of the working will of God, and of the validity of the originating fact in which that will took form and came among us. "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: these three agree in one."

H. SCOTT HOLLAND, *Pleas and Claims for Christ*, p. 67.

REFERENCES: v. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1187; J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascensiontide*, p. 160; *Ibid.*, *Sermons for Lent and Passiontide*, p. 172. v. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1213.

Chap v., ver. 10.—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."

THE Inward Witness.

I. The nature of the witness must be first ascertained. The illustration suggests that the witness must be something clear and definite, and capable of being ascertained beyond doubt. (1) There is the conscious experience of a new force acting upon the soul, a new life circulating in every faculty. (2) This new inward force is connected invariably with a certain belief, which gathers round one unchanging form: the form of Christ

upon His cross. (3) The whole man is changed, and changed in the direction of holiness. The purifying water has touched the conscience and the heart, and made them clean and Christ-like—the holy reflection of a pure and holy Saviour.

II. We must glance at what it is that the witness proves. We have the witness in ourselves, but to what? (1) First, it is to the reality and solemn greatness of the world unseen—the soul, sin, the Saviour, God, heaven, and hell. The quickened soul actually sees and touches these things with an intensity so truly equal to that of bodily sight as to leave the relative importance of the two words their proper and natural value. (2) Then it is a witness to the truth of Christianity. For the man has tried it, and proved it to be what it professes to be. (3) It is a witness to the Divine authority and power of the word of God. For such a man opens his Bible, and finds there the living image of himself. (4) It is a witness to our personal acceptance before God. It is the witness of the Spirit with our spirit that we are indeed God's children. For whence comes this inward life, this Divine force, which works upon the soul, whence this vivid sight of the cross and the new and higher life filling the soul once dead in trespasses and sins? Whence come they but from God? They are His voice, and that the voice, not of an avenging Judge, but of a gracious and reconciled Father.

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 61.

REFERENCES: v. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1250; vol. xx., No. 1207; vol. xxiv., No. 1428; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 214.

Chap. v., ver. 12.—"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

THE Lord and Giver of Life.

I. If religion had nothing to do with this life, it would be enough to become religious when we are on the point of departing from life, when we are on the borders of another world; but it is never thus that the Bible speaks of religion. Rather it tells us that religion has the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come; that it is not a mere death-bed ornament, but something that beautifies, elevates, and makes noble this present life. Without it a man cannot live the highest life of which he is capable. There may be existence without religion, but not the sort of life which his Creator intended man to live. This being so, we are not surprised that the text speaks of

religion as something which we should have in our present life. It does not say that he that hath the Son shall have life, but "He that hath the Son *hath* life." As the oak is contained in the acorn, so eternal life has its seed and first beginnings in the life we are living now.

II. Having the Son seems to mean, in the first instance, having the revelation which God gave by His Son. God taught us through Jesus Christ that sin is a very terrible thing, so terrible that it cost the death of the Son of God. But He did not stop here: He proved to us at the same time His great love to us sinners. Let a man once realise that the revelation made by Jesus Christ is true for him personally, and a new life will be communicated to his soul from the Lord and Giver of life. He has the Son now; and therefore he realises the fact that he has a share of the life, spiritual, regenerate, eternal, which Christ promised to His faithful disciples.

III. A true Christian is one who lives a double life: the ordinary life which all men live and an inner, secret life which is hid with Christ in God. This life is the scene, so to speak, of his greatest joys and sorrows, and Christ is the Sharer of both. He is the Head, and each true believer one of His members. He is the Vine, and we are His branches; and we are strong, healthy, and fruitful only by deriving sap and nourishment from the Vine.

E. J. HARDY, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 231.

Chap. v., ver. 12.—"He that hath the Son hath life."

CHRIST the Life of the Soul.

It is a very difficult thing to define accurately what we mean by life. Perhaps we shall not be very far wrong if we say that in its highest sense life is that state of which any being is, or feels that it is, capable. So that when anything has reached its true condition, that is its life.

I. The life of every one lies in that Divine particle which man originally received. That particle is lost—quite lost. Christ is the only Son of God. Therefore in Christ the Divine particle has descended. It is only in Christ, it can only be by connection with Christ, that any son of Adam can regain the Divine particle of life wherewith he was originally endowed, and which is essentially man's life. Therefore "he that hath the Son hath life."

II. We all have felt the difference between the cold effect of a picture we look at and the glow of the touch of its living

original. We are too accustomed to deal with the holy truths of our religion as pictures. We look at them, but they do not speak to us; we admire them, but we are not influenced by them; we dream about them, but it is not action. The sentiment is strong, but there is little principle. There is much poetry, but it is not life. All this is "not to have Christ." Possession of Christ appears to me to be made up of three things. (1) The Christian has Christ's work. Believe it, as a matter of actual historical fact, that Christ did bear the cross for you, and the life for man He has received back from the Father He now holds in heaven for you; and that assent of your heart to that great truth immediately makes that great truth your own. (2) The Christian has Christ Himself. We want a presence, an all-pervading, happy, constant presence, with us. We want a love which we can grasp, which we are conscious shall never decrease. We want the glory of an eternity thrown over us. All this we have if we have Christ. (3) But a man's life does not lie only in these things. There is a deep, secret, mystic being which every one holds—a life within life. It is the life of the Holy Ghost. There must be the real feeding upon Christ in the soul of a man if he would maintain what is, after all, his truest life. If a man would live, he must lay up Christ always in the recesses of his innermost, secret affections.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 228.

REFERENCES: v. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 755. v. 13.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxx., No. 1791. v. 13-15.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., No. 596.

Chap. v., ver. 14.—"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us."

RIGHT Petitions Heard by God.

The power by which we overcome the world is the Divine life which we have in the Lord Jesus Christ; but in order to our obtaining that life two conditions must be fulfilled: first, God must give it; and secondly, we must take it.

I. God must give it, for although there may be many things that we could earn or produce for ourselves, obviously there is one thing which we could neither earn nor create, into which, it is plain, we must be born—that is, our life. Now this is true of all life, whether the life that we possess by nature, or the life that we possess by grace. Nevertheless, respecting the Divine life that is in Christ Jesus a further affirmation must needs be made. It must not only be given us by God,

but it must be taken through our faith. And this arises from the very nature of spiritual things, for when God is said to have made us free and responsible creatures He is said in effect to have ordained that our obedience should be of a certain quality, that it should not be that of the world, unconscious and constrained, not that of the beasts, unconscious and instinctive, but that of the holy angels, the voluntary obedience of a free and virtuous choice.

II. What is meant by asking according to God's will? We must make both the matter and the spirit of our prayers correspond to His will. We must ask first in the right spirit, and then for the right thing. (1) We must ask in the right spirit. We must, as the Apostle says, lift up holy hands. In the hands of supplication which we raise to heaven there must be found no sinful and inordinate desires. (2) We must ask the right thing. You will find what is according to God's will, what you not only may expect, but must expect, to receive, in the pages of God's holy word. Lord Clive, we are told, once when he was in India was taken into a vaulted chamber which was filled from end to end with all kinds of treasure: there were heaps of gold, heaps of silver, heaps of precious trinkets, heaps of jewels; and he was told by the native ruler of Bengal to take as much as he pleased. And recalling that incident of his life, it is said that he exclaimed, "I am amazed at my own moderation!" Now the Bible is God's treasure-house, filled from end to end with precious jewels; and we are bidden to take as many of the rarest and richest as we please, without money and without price.

J. MOORHOUSE, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 624.

REFERENCES: v. 14.—T. V. Tymms, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiii., p. 181. v. 14, 15.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 37; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 162.

Chap. v., vers. 14-17.

THE Sin unto Death.

St. John appears to speak of some one sin as standing apart from all others, as a sin unto death—a sin so fatal, so entirely beyond the possibility of pardon, that Christians should even refrain from making petitions to God on behalf of one who had committed this sin. A little consideration, however, may lead us to conclude that such was not precisely the meaning which was in St. John's mind when he wrote. The Apostle is speaking of the power of a Christian's prayers. He shows it

to be an immediate consequence of our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God that we should offer up our prayers in full confidence that those prayers will be heard, and that they will be answered, provided only that the petition is in accordance with God's holy will. He then goes on to show that a Christian may obtain forgiveness for his brother by intercession, provided that the sin for which he prays has not been a deadly sin, a sin unto death. St. John is evidently anxious that his doctrine of intercession should not be abused, and therefore he limits his doctrine by saying that there is a kind of sin for which he cannot venture to encourage Christians to pray with the hope that the sin will be pardoned. St. John is not laying down a rule as to what sins can be pardoned and what not, but as to what sins form a fair and proper subject for Christian intercession. Let us learn from the subject that sin is certainly a more deadly thing than many men suppose, and that there is danger lest those whom Christ has redeemed should fall away from grace and never rise again. Therefore let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 383.

REFERENCES: v. 16.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 132. v. 16, 17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 183. v. 17.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 60; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 264. v. 18.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 210.

Chap. v., vers. 18-20.

INFIRMITY of Faith: its Cause and Remedy.

I. If all the Christian people about us had a clear vision of God's face, if they distinctly heard God's voice, if they lived and moved and had their being under the constant control of the invisible terrors and glories of the spiritual universe, you and I would not receive the existence of that universe on their authority indeed, but our whole spiritual nature would be raised and elevated by the atmosphere that we should be breathing, and our vision of that universe would become clearer too, and we too should catch the mighty tones that moved through it, and we should be stirred and agitated by all its splendours and by all its terrors. We cannot help having a weak faith in these days, or if we can, it is so hard to help it that that man must be of an heroic temper, must have the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in an altogether exceptional degree, who escapes from the general spirit of his times. The great objects for which Christ came into this world were twofold: not to bring us one by one to God

merely, but to bring us all to God together, and to restore us to each other as brethren as well as to restore us to God as our Father. And if we desire to master and to escape from this infirmity of faith, this dimness of spiritual vision, that spiritual isolation of which we have been miserably guilty must cease; and if we return to union with each other, we shall then have more direct union with God.

II. Another reason may be alleged besides this spiritual isolation for the infirmity of our faith and the dimness of our vision. When the uncertainty comes we think about it; we dwell upon it; we are troubled by it; we try to answer it, instead of turning our eyes at once unto that high region in which the great spiritual realities dwell; and especially, I think, our thought is not sufficiently engaged about Him who calls Himself the Truth. Let us look up to Him who abides with the Church for evermore; and the spirit of wisdom and revelation being granted to us through Jesus Christ our Lord, then the life of Christ in this world and His life in the invisible world in which He reigns now will become vividly real to us, will be bright with a supernatural splendour, and influence us with a supernatural power.

III. As to those who are in the earlier movements of religious thought, who have just begun to serve God, and to whom these great truths are all unreal, they must be for a time content, I suppose, to remain as they are; they must be born again before they can see the kingdom of heaven; and when they are born again, the vision does not at once become bright, and clear, and distinct. Immediate and vivid consciousness of the new universe into which they have entered must not be expected. They must for a time be contented to have faith in an invisible Christ. And why should we not for a time believe in Him whom we have not seen? The testimony comes to us from innumerable souls that they trusted for a time in an invisible Christ, and that after a while His glory was revealed to them. They waited for a while, looking for His appearance; and by-and-by He appeared, and they came to live and move and have their being in Him.

R. W. DALE, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 399.

Chap. v., ver. 21.—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

IDOLS.

I. Let us glance at three forms of idolatry against which we must ever be on our guard. (1) There is the worship of other gods, or false gods: the worship of Moloch, and Baalim, and Ashtaroth, gods of gold and jewels, of lust and blood. (2)

There is the worship of the true God under false and idolatrous symbols. The golden calf was meant as a visible symbol of God's unseen presence. It was a cherubic emblem, like those woven on the curtains of the temple on Sion, or those which stretched their wings over the mercy-seat. And yet calf-worship was idolatry; it was a violation of the second commandment. (3) The third form of idolatry is the worship of the true God under the guise of false notions, false conditions.

II. Every one of us is an idolater who has not God in all his thoughts, and who has cast away the laws of God from the governance of his life. I know not that it is a much worse idolatry to deny God altogether, and openly to deify the brute impulses of our own nature, than it is in words to confess God, yet not to do, nor to intend to do, never seriously to try to do, what He commands or to abandon what He forbids. If you do not worship the public idol of the market-place, have you no personal idol of the cave?

III. But St. John will not leave us to what is abstract: he will point us to One whom he has seen and heard, and his hands have handled, even the Word of life; to One who is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person. "This," he says, "is the true God and eternal life." If you rely on religious teachers, they may offer you a dead Christ for the living Christ; an agonised Christ for the ascended Christ; an ecclesiastical Christ for the spiritual Christ; a Christ of the elect few for the Christ of the sinful many; a petty, formalising, sectarian Christ for the royal Lord of the great, free heart of manhood; a Christ of the fold for the Christ of the one great flock; a Christ of Gerizim or Jerusalem, of Rome or of Geneva, of Oxford or of Clapham, for the Christ of the universal world. So long as we worship idols, so long as we take pleasure in unrighteousness, so long as we love the darkness rather than the light—so long we cannot see God, neither know Him. And because to know Him is life and eternal life, and because there is no other life, since all other life is but a living death, therefore St. John wrote as the last word of his epistle, as the last word of the whole revelation of the New Testament, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

F. W. FARRAR, *Sermons and Addresses in America*, p. 164.

II. JOHN.

Vers. 1, 2.

Truth the Bond of Love.

Consider the moral atmosphere which surrounded, and the motive power which created and sustained, that strong bond of affection which bound the heart of St. John to the Christian lady and her family.

I. The atmosphere of this friendship was sincerity: "Whom I love," not in the truth (there is no article in the original), but "in truth." Not "truly": St. John would have used an adverb to say that. What he means is that truth—truth of thought, truth of feeling, truth of speech and intercourse—was the very air in which his affection for this Christian lady had grown up and maintained itself. And the word which he uses to describe this affection points to the same conclusion. It does not mean instinctive personal affection—affection based on feeling and impulse, such as exists between near relations; still less does it denote that lower form of affection which has its roots and its energy in passion and sense. It stands for that kind of affection which is based on a reasoned perception of excellence in its object; and thus it is the word which is invariably used to describe the love that man ought to have for God. But such a love as this between man and man grows up and is fostered in an atmosphere of truthfulness. It is grounded not on feeling or passion, but on a reciprocal conviction of simplicity of purpose; and being true in its origin, it is true at every stage of its development. It is mortally wounded, this "love in truth," when once it is conscious of distinct insincerity. When once it has reason to doubt the worthiness of its object, when once it falters in its utterance of simple truth, from a secret fear that there is something which cannot be probed to the quick or which cannot bear the sunlight, then its life is gone, even though its forms and courtesies should survive. It may even be strengthened by a temporary misunderstanding when each friend is sincere. It dies when there is on either side a well-grounded suspicion of the taint of insincerity.

II. What was the motive power of St. John's love? St. John replies, "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." He adds that all who know the truth share in this affection. Here we have an article before "truth." "The truth" means here, not a habit or temper of mind, but a body of ascertained fact, which is fact whether acknowledged or not by the mind to be so. What is here called "the truth" by St. John, we should in modern language speak of as "the true faith." This was the combining link, as sincerity of purpose was the atmosphere, of the affection which existed between this Christian lady and St. John. Among the counteracting and restorative influences which carry the Church of Christ unharmed through the animated, and sometimes passionate, discussion of public questions, private friendships, formed and strengthened in the atmosphere of a fearless sincerity and knit and banded together by a common share in the faith of ages, are, humanly speaking, among the strongest. One and all, we may at some time realise to the letter the language of St. John to this Christian mother. Many of our brethren must realise it now. They have learnt to love in truth, not by impulse; they have learnt to bind and rivet their love by the strong bond of the common and unchanging faith. All who know anything of Jesus Christ know something of this affection for some of His servants; some of us, it may be, know much, much more than we can feel that we deserve. Such love is not like a human passion, which dies gradually away with the enfeeblement and the death of the nerves and of the brain. It is created and fed by the truth which "dwelleth" in the Christian soul, and which, as St. John adds, "shall be with us for ever." It is guaranteed to last, even as its eternal object lasts. It is born and is nurtured amid the things of time; but from the first it belongs to, and in the event it is incorporated with, the life of eternity.

H. P. LIDDON, *Easter Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 195.

REFERENCE: 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 299.

Ver. 3.—"Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."

GRACE, Mercy, and Peace.

We have here a very unusual form of the apostolic salutation. "Grace, mercy, and peace" are put together in this fashion only in Paul's two epistles to Timothy and in this the present instance; and all reference to the Holy Spirit as an agent in

the benediction is, as there, omitted. The three main words, "Grace, mercy, and peace," stand related to each other in a very interesting manner. The Apostle starts, as it were, from the fountain-head, and slowly traces the course of the blessing down to its lodgment in the heart of man. There is the fountain, and the stream, and, if I may so say, the great still lake in the soul into which its waters flow, and which the flowing waters make; there is the sun, and the beam, and the brightness grows deep in the heart of God: grace, referring solely to the Divine attitude and thought; mercy, the manifestation of grace in act, referring to the workings of that great Godhead in its relation to humanity; and peace, which is the issue in the soul of the fluttering down upon it of the mercy which is the activity of the grace. So these three come down, as it were, a great, solemn marble staircase from the heights of the Divine mind, one step at a time, to the level of earth; and blessings are shed along the earth. Such is the order. All begins with grace; and the end and purpose of grace, when it flashes into deed and becomes mercy, is to fill my soul with quiet repose, and shed across all the turbulent sea of human love a great calm, a beam of sunshine that gilds, and miraculously stills while it gilds, the waves.

I. The first thing, then, that strikes me in it is how the text exults in that great thought that there is no reason whatsoever for God's love except God's will. The very foundation and notion of the word "grace" is a free, undeserved, unsolicited, self-prompted, and altogether gratuitous bestowment, a love that is its own reason, as indeed the whole of the Divine acts are. Just as we say of Him that He draws His being from Himself, so the whole motive for His action and the whole reason for His heart of tenderness to us lies in Himself.

II. And then there lies in this great word, which in itself is a gospel, the preaching that God's love, though it be not turned away by, is made tender by, our sin. Grace is love extended to a person that might reasonably expect, because he deserves, something very different; and when there is laid as the foundation of everything "the grace of our Father and of the Son of the Father," it is but packing into one word that great truth which we all of us, saints and sinners, need—a sign that God's love is love that deals with our transgressions and shortcomings, flows forth perfectly conscious of them, and manifests itself in taking them away, both in their guilt, punishment, and peril. God's grace softens itself into mercy, and all His dealings with

us men must be on the footing that we are not only sinful, but weak and wretched, and so fit subjects for a compassion which is the strangest paradox of a perfect and Divine heart. The mercy of God is the outcome of His grace.

III. And as is the fountain and the stream, so is the great lake into which it spreads itself when it is received into a human heart. Peace comes, the all-sufficient summing up of everything that God can give and that men can need, from His loving-kindness and from their needs. The world is too wide to be narrowed to any single aspect of the various discords and disharmonies which trouble men. Peace with God; peace in this anarchic kingdom within me, where conscience and will, hopes and fears, duty and passion, sorrows and joys, cares and confidence, are ever fighting one another, where we are torn asunder by conflicting aims and rival claims, and wherever any part of our nature asserting itself against another leads to intestine warfare, and troubles the poor soul. All that is harmonised, and quieted down, and made concordant and co-operative to one great end when the grace and the mercy have flowed silently into our spirits and harmonised aims and desires.

A. MACLAREN, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 99.

III. JOHN.

Ver. 2.—"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

Spiritual Prosperity.

I. Of what, in the language of the world, is commonly designated prosperity, perhaps the two main elements are wealth and power. There is a wealth, a power, of the soul. (1) There is, in no exclusively metaphorical sense, a riches of the soul. Money, property, worldly goods, are not more real possessions than thought, knowledge, wisdom. Nor are the outward comforts and luxuries, the gratifications of sense and appetite, that may be procured by the former, more literally a man's own, what belongs to him, what makes him richer, than are warm affections, a fertile imagination, a memory stored with information, and, above all, a heart full of God's grace. (2) Power. We may be inwardly as well as outwardly powerful. In the little world within the breast there are stations of rank, dominion, authority, to which we may aspire, or from which we may fall. There is an inward slavery, baser than any bodily servitude; there is an inward rule and governance of a man's spirit, an object of loftier ambition far than the possession of any earthly crown or sceptre.

II. Note the reasons for which this soul-prosperity should be regarded in our desires as the standard or measure of outward prosperity. (1) Destitute of inward grace, it is neither for a man's own good nor for that of his fellow-men that he should be possessed of outward wealth or power; (2) and if a man's soul be right with God, the possession of these outward advantages is both safe for himself and profitable for others.

J. Caird, *Sermons*, p. 218.

References: 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 463. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1148.

Vers. 6-8, R V.—"Whom if thou bring forward on their journey worthily of God, thou shalt do well: because that for the sake of the Name they went forth. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers with the truth."

This short letter opens for us a window into the past, and shows us a little incident in the inner life of an unnamed

Church. Some travelling evangelists, apparently from Ephesus, the residence of the Apostle, had gone forth armed with what he modestly calls "somewhat which I have written," and had found their way to a city where they had been hospitably welcomed by a certain Gaius or Caius. But in that little community there was an ill-conditioned dog-in-the-manger, who, in his touchy self-importance, thought that he was somehow aggrieved by the Apostle's recommendation, and sought to revenge his insulted pre-eminence upon the innocent evangelists, refusing to receive them because he would not receive the Apostle, and even going so far as to threaten excommunication to their sympathisers. So the evangelists went back to Ephesus and told their story, and the Apostle appears to send them once again to the same place, and gives them this letter, partly in order to express his satisfaction with the work of Gaius and partly in order to prepare the way for their future reception. The words of my text are the gist of the Epistle in so far as it concerns the evangelists and their host. They seem to me to suggest three general thoughts: (1) the motive and aim of the missionary worker; (2) the standard for the missionary helper; (3) the honour common to them both.

I. The motive and aim of the missionary worker: "For the sake of the Name they went forth." Now I need not remind you how in Scripture the name is more than a collection of syllables. It is the expression of the nature of the person or thing to which it is applied. In reference to a person it tells us not only who, but what, he is; and, in fact, we may say it is tantamount, or all but tantamount, to the whole revelation of Jesus Christ, the sum of all we know about Him—His nature, His character, His work. Here, then, is the one motive, as for all Christian life, so eminently for missionary work. Every other will fail us; it is far deeper than compassion for souls; it is the parent of compassion for souls. For the sake of the Name, and for that alone, let us see to it that we do our little bit of work, whatsoever it may be. As long as our Churches live by that Name, so long will there go forth man after man driven out to carry it. Let them falter in their allegiance to the supernatural, Divine, sacrificial elements of the Name, and the missionary impulse will become spasmodic spurts, and will die like water out of a pipe when the pressure is slacked off. Only he who can with all his heart say, "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," is worthy to be His chosen vessel to bear it to the Gentiles.

II. The standard for missionary helpers. And so mark here the standard for missionary helpers. I have read my text with the alteration which you will find also, I think, in the Revised Version, which substitutes for "after a godly sort" the literal and most pregnant rendering "worthily of God." That is the standard. It bids us consider what He is. The dignity of the recipient should in some measure be expressed by the preciousness of the gift. It bids us consider what He has given us, and how He has given it. "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." Worthily of God—He is in His servants; treat them as you would treat Him if He stood before you.

III. The honour common to workers and helpers. Here is this great thought, that workers and helpers alike may have the joy and the confidence of believing that the truth works with them, and they with it. Think of the honour this lays upon us and the greatness with which it invests our work. Some great artist will strike out the outline of some immortal picture and labour upon it, and then he lets all the anonymous little painters that belong to his school and are animated by his spirit come with their feebler brushes and lay a tint or two on. Jesus Christ lets us, His scholars, work upon His great picture, permits us to co-operate with Him; His truth cannot reach its ends—namely, that men should recognise it—without our co-operation. "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord"; and some eyes that are too bleared to gaze upon the unveiled sun may be drawn to a belief in and a love for it if they see its tints spread out in prismatic beauty even by the misty vapours of our poor individuality. We are fellow-helpers with the truth, and that should make us know that our work is grave. Think of the confidence that should inspire us in doing our service. We are working with the strongest thing in the world in the line of the Divine purpose; we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth; and when the net result of all the activities, furtherances, and antagonisms is summed up it will be found that the only thing that lasts is that truth and the work of the men that helped it. To oppose it is like fighting against the western gales or trying to counteract gravitation. Let us fling our work into the line of the Divine purpose, and be sure of this: that the truth will help us if we help it.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, October, 1892.

REFERENCE: 8. — W. M. Punshon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 81.

JUDE.

REFERENCES: 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 434. 3.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., No. 1592; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 292; J. Edmunds. *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 162; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 424. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 32.

Ver. 9.—"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

WAR in Heaven.

I. Contention in the world of spirits. In such passages as these the curtain is for a moment lifted up, and we behold war—"war in heaven." The struggle between good and evil is by no means limited to what we see in this world. The area of the conflict is far-extended. The din of distant battle-fields reaches the spiritual ear. Shadowy forms are seen in deadly fight beyond any regions with which our present thoughts are familiar. The victory, indeed, is not doubtful; but the fight is very real, and it is a fight in which we ourselves are closely concerned. Contention—this is a condition of our present state upon earth. We cannot be on Christ's side without contending. We are called, indeed, to peace, but it is equally true that we are called to war.

II. One thing in this passage comes out clear to our apprehension: that the disposal of the body of Moses is viewed in the spiritual world as a matter of some considerable moment. The angels take an interest in the burial of the great lawgiver. The tomb of Moses, if it had been known, would probably have had a significance in subsequent history very different from the burying-place of Machpelah or the sepulchres of the kings of Judah. There would, to say the least, have been a great risk of idolatrous veneration connected with the top of Mount Pisgah. That place might have become the Mecca of the Jewish world; for in the human mind there is a natural love of pilgrimages and of relics.

III. Michael durst not bring against the devil a railing accusation. What is the meaning of this? It could not have

been fear in the sense of cowardice; we cannot suppose that fear of that kind can have exerted influence over an archangel. No; it was the fear of taking on himself what properly belonged to God; it was the fear of doing that which was indecorous; it was the resolve that he would not lose his self-command. "The Lord rebuke thee." Retribution belongs to God, and we must wait His time.

J. S. HOWSON, *Our Collects, Epistles, and Gospels*, p. 128.

REFERENCES: 9.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 10. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 797; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 126. 13.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 528. 14, 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1307.

Ver. 17.—"Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."

PRACTICAL Use of the Epistles of Paul.

I. The remarkable man whom God specially raised up to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles must himself be familiar to us if we would study his epistles profitably. In order to have an intelligent idea of what Paul was and what work he had to do, we must extend our reading in some measure over the history of the time, and, indeed, over that of the ages which preceded. Again, besides forming in our minds some sufficient idea of the circumstances of the writer, we should also know those of the persons to whom these Epistles were written. Very much, indeed, of the doubt and difficulty which hangs over many passages of St. Paul, arises from persons not being able to enter into his character and the circumstances under which the words were written.

II. For every Gospel, for every Epistle, it is absolutely necessary that we should have a consistent, intelligent idea of the person and office of our Lord. He is the centre of them all; in all He is set forth. Unless we know Him, we cannot know them. The spiritual mind must not stand alone in the study of Scripture, but it is of all the chief and crowning qualification. Though it without others may be weak and limited, others without it are altogether powerless. The cottager with the spiritual mind knows more of the Bible than the theologian without it, but the theologian with it stands in the highest position of all.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v., p. 291.

Ver. 19.—"Sensual, having not the Spirit."

THE difference between the sensual and the spiritual is in some cases most evident; in others it is most subtle. There are men who never have an idea beyond the lowest self-gratification; they live for it; they boast of it. We need not analyse the moral peculiarities of such men. There are others, however, whose sensuality, though more refined, is not less potent in impairing the finest capacities and tendencies of the soul. Who are they? (1) Men who live entirely within the sphere of the visible; (2) men who look at actions without inquiring into motives; (3) men who look at their own profits, not at the benefit of the commonwealth; (4) men to whom the social is more than the spiritual; (5) men to whom the present is more than the future. Who are the spiritual? There is a noble sense in which the poet is spiritual; so is the musician; so is the painter. Such men translate ideas into language, into sound, into form. There is, however, an infinitely nobler sense in which the term "spiritual" is used: the sense which involves the presence and dominion of the Holy Ghost in the soul of man. The Holy Ghost can be received only through the work of Jesus Christ.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 61.

REFERENCE: 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 167.

Ver. 20.—"Praying in the Holy Ghost, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

I. PRAYER is the Divinely appointed means of obtaining all the promised blessings needful for our spiritual and eternal welfare. This truth is quite clear to the student of Scripture. The lips of eternal truth have uttered words which prove the necessity of prayer, and also prove the omnipotent efficacy of prayer: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"; "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things"—give the Holy Spirit—"to them that ask Him." "Be careful for nothing," says St. Paul, "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." God says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." What wonder, then, if those who neglect the means of grace and prayer grow into a state of spiritual poverty and destitution! "They have not because

they ask not," or, if they ask at all, they "ask amiss"—they ask coldly; they ask carelessly. They talk much about God in public, but talk very little with God in private. They are known to engage in exercises many, but not devotional ones. They are seen in numerous attitudes, but seldom on their knees. Therefore the Holy Ghost is not fully given, because not fervently and properly implored.

II. We cannot lay down any specific rule as to the length of our prayers; this will at all times depend upon the circumstances in which we are placed. The best prayer that was ever composed is a very short one, but we must not forget that He who composed it while on earth spent whole nights in prayer.

III. What we want in our prayers is a sincerity of soul, a hard-breathed earnestness, such a feeling as marked the wrestling Jacob when he said, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Another reflection on the subject of prayer is that we should endeavour, in Divine strength, to keep up a communion with God right through the day. "Pray without ceasing"; walk with God, live in God, and wait on God, for He says, "Them that honour Me I will honour." Again, when we approach our God in prayer, we should cherish a spirit of reverential awe. It is our duty, before we bow the knee in supplication, to seek to have our spirit suitably affected by the consideration of the majesty of the Being we address, for we speak in prayer to Him before whom heaven's highest archangels presume not to appear but with veiled faces; we speak in prayer with Him who chargeth those angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean.

W. W. LANE, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 13.

Ver. 20.—"Building up yourselves on your most holy faith."

CHRISTIAN Morality Based upon Christian Faith.

I. The ethics of Christianity are in close connection with its doctrines. The Christian's character is to be built up, as St. Jude tells us, on the strong foundation of the Christian's most holy faith. "Christianity purports to be, not a system of moral teaching only, but a system of revealed facts which centre in our Lord, and on which moral teaching is to rest." Try to make out a scheme of practical Christianity detached from the Christian creed, and you are attempting a hopeless task; if you tear away the dogmas, the precepts lose their sanction and motive power. A writer of eminence, who stands apart from Christian orthodoxy and thinks that there is a want

of masculine breadth in the current moral teaching of the Churches, yet declines to hold "any Church dogma responsible for this insufficiency," predicts that it would take centuries to establish any morality on a non-Christian basis, and affirms that the ethical teaching of the present day, to be influential, ought to grow out of Christianity. Truly it ought, for Christianity is a life as much as a creed, a life which, "in virtue of its distinctive doctrine, is nourished with a richer goodness than all other religious life."

II. What is the animating principle of a life that is truly and effectively Christian? It is faith in the living Christ as a personal Saviour, Divine and human, who is not only the example to be imitated, but the very source of that moral power and that spiritual life which are to make imitation possible. It is the Christ of St. Paul and St. John, the Christ of the catholic creeds, who has been the true Author of all that purity, tenderness, devotedness, which has made Christian morality a new thing in the world.

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 15.

REFERENCES: 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 719; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 168.

Vers. 20, 21.

"BUT ye, beloved," living amongst these careless ones, shall be a little flock, known to their Father, and their Shepherd, and their Guide, marked out in strong contrast to the children of the world. Their rule is the will of One who is invisible; they walk not by the sight of their eyes, nor by the hearing of their ears. It is these persons whom redemption binds with its threefold cord of power, love, and wisdom.

I. "But ye, beloved." These men are the objects of love, not from the world, but from the Father. God looks on them with perfect approval. Not that they are perfect in themselves, but that they are united to His beloved Son, in whom He is perfectly pleased. They are the salt of the earth, keeping it from ruin. And what lesson may these, God's servants, learn? "Building yourselves up in your most holy faith." There is but one foundation—other can no man lay—and that one is already laid by God. But every man must build thereon; and the building which he is to rear is himself.

II. But what are the various steps and details of this holy work? The question is answered by following the text. (1) "Praying in the Holy Ghost." The life of these men is a life of

prayer. (2) They keep themselves in the love of God. There is but one thing that can separate us from the love of God, and that one thing is our own will, our own act and deed. And how can we keep ourselves? Let us watch and pray, and use all means of grace, that we fall not from our place in Christ, for thus only can we forfeit the Father's love. (3) The believer has also a hope full of immortality: "Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Dwelt in by the Holy Spirit, received into and kept in the perfect love of the Father, they shall be endowed with eternal life by the mercy of the Redeemer. Thus the three Persons of the Trinity co-operate in the work of saving man, enter into and abide in the believer's soul.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 395.

How to Keep in the Love of God.

I. Consider this central injunction, the very keystone of the arch of a devout Christian life: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." The secret of all blessedness is to live in the love of God. We may dwell at rest, like the inhabitants of some deep, sunken dell, which is all still, without a breath to move the thick blossoms on the loaded tree, even whilst winds are raving and waves thundering away on the iron-bound coast. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

II. Further, notice the subsidiary exhortations which point out the means of obeying the central command. (1) The first means of securing our continual abiding in the conscious enjoyment of God's love to us is our continual effort at building up a noble character on the foundation of faith. (2) "Praying in the Holy Ghost." Such prayer is the true help for the builder; his right attitude is on his knees.

III. Notice the expectation attendant on the obedience to the central commandment: "Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The consciousness of Christ's present love is the surest ground for the hope in His future mercy.

A. MACLAREN, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 170.

REFERENCE: 20, 21.—E. Garbett, *The Soul's Life*, p. 354.

Ver. 21.—"Keep yourselves in the love of God."

A CHRISTMAS Morning Talk with Children.

I. Love is a fire that wants a great deal of keeping. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." When I am writing in my

study sometimes, what do you think takes place? The bright, warm fire goes out. It dies, as you say, of its own accord. I have not poked or attended to it, and it simply goes out. It was lighted; the coals were red; but through my neglect they turned black and cold. It is not enough for you as children to feel now and then love to Jesus; you must "keep yourselves in the love of God." My young friends are to be little Christians every day, and that is the beautiful ideal of the Gospel of Christ. You are not brought to the Christian temple only on great festivals like the Passover, but every day you are to feel Jesus Christ, your Saviour, near you; you are to trust Him; you are to put your little hearts into His precious keeping; you are to realise that the fire wants keeping up.

II. There are many ways of keeping the fire in. The first is to put some coals on it. "Where there is no wood the fire goeth out." A little child cannot do without reading, and every little hymn is "wood on the fire," every remembered text is timber, every quiet counsel of father and mother is fuel on the fire; so also is every good sermon that children can understand. Feed it yourselves by thinking about Jesus Christ and quietly, when no one is with you, offering your prayer to God that your fire may grow warm and bright; for it is the fire of God.

III. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," because at Christmas-time you see especially what God's love is. Love is not a mere sentiment. Many little folks who weep the most do not feel the most. It is very nice to see a little child fling its arms round its mother's neck and say, "Oh, I do love you so." The mother says what Christ says: "I am glad, my darling; but if you love me, keep my commandments." If you are to keep yourselves in the love of God, you must try to be like Him.

IV. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," because love lasts for ever. Many things we can only keep for a little while. I shall part with my faith and hope, but "charity never faileth." Keep yourselves, then, in the love of God, in its spirit, in its beauty, in its unselfishness and sacrifice, for if God laid down His life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.

W. M. STATHAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 408.

REFERENCES: 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1286; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 352; T. Binney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 24. 23.—*Ibid.*, p. 350; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 40. 24, 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 634.

REVELATION.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vii., p. 1. i. 1-9.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 28.

Chap. i., ver. 4.—"The seven spirits which are before His throne."

A REASON why the Holy Ghost is called "the seven spirits" is found in that remarkable sevenfold action by which He works upon the soul of a man, for though the influences of the Holy Ghost are indeed very many, and the enumeration of them might be extended very far, they do range themselves, with a very singular exactness, under seven heads.

I. To open the heart like Lydia's; to show us what we are; to make us feel sin, and specially sins done against Christ—that is the Spirit's first work.

II. The Spirit shows us Christ. Every day's experience proves that we can only know Christ by the Holy Spirit. There is no other power that ever can or will reveal Christ to the sinner's soul.

III. The Spirit comforts. I place this office here, for all the Spirit's comfortings have to do with Jesus Christ. I believe the Holy Ghost never comforts a man but through Christ. He never uses the commonplaces of men's consolation; He never deals in generalities: He shows you that Jesus loves you; He shows you that Jesus died for you, that God has forgiven you. So He makes Christ fill an empty place. He exhibits the exceeding loveliness and sufficiency of Christ's person.

IV. After this the Spirit proceeds to teach the man, who is now become a child of God. He fits the heart to the subject, and the subject to the heart. Hence the marvellous power and the singular sweetness there is when you sit under the Holy Spirit's teaching.

V. For where He teaches, there He sanctifies. There is never a good desire but it was He who prompted it, and never a right thought but it was He who imparted it. It is He who gives the higher motive, and makes the heart begin to point to the glory of God.

VI. He is the Intercessor who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

VII. He seals the soul which He has made His temple. As some proprietor when he goes away puts his mark upon his jewels, so the Holy Ghost fastens you to Christ, that nothing may ever divide you. He gives you a comforting assurance that you are a child of God; He makes in the soul a little sanctuary of peace and love.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 156.

Chap. i., vers. 4, 5.—"Grace be unto you, and peace, from . . . Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth."

I TAKE the words simply as they lie here, asking you to consider, first, how grace and peace come to us "from the faithful Witness"; how, secondly, they come "from the First-begotten from the dead"; and how, lastly, they come "from the Prince of the kings of the earth."

I. Now as to the first of these, "the faithful Witness." All of you who have any familiarity with the language of Scripture will know that a characteristic of all the writings which are ascribed to the Apostle John—viz., his Gospel, his Epistles, and the book of the Revelation—is their free and remarkable use of the word "witness." But where did John get this word? According to his own teaching, he got it from the lips of the Master, who began His career with these words: "We speak that we do know, and bear witness to that we have seen," and who all but ended it with these royal words: "Thou sayest that I am a King. For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Christ Himself, then, claimed to be, in an eminent and special sense, the Witness to the world. He witnesses by His words; by all His deeds of grace, and truth, and gentleness, and pity; by all His yearnings over wickedness, and sorrow, and sinfulness; by all His drawings of the profligate, and the outcast, and the guilty to Himself; His life of loneliness, His death of shame.

II. We have grace and peace from the Conqueror of death. The "First-begotten from the dead" does not precisely convey the idea of the original, which would be more accurately represented by "the First-born from the dead," the Resurrection being looked upon as a kind of birth into a higher order of life. (1) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the confirmation of His testimony. (2) Faith in the Resurrection gives us a living

Lord to confide in. (3) In Him and in His resurrection life we are armed for victory over that foe whom He has conquered.

III. We have grace and peace from the King of kings. He is the "Prince of the kings of the earth," (1) because He is "the faithful Witness"; (2) because in that witness He dies; (3) because, witnessing and slain, He has risen again.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 3.

Chap. i., vers. 4, 5.

THE Catholic Church.

Let us recall what would be the general aspect of the Church of Christ, born into actual life on the day of Pentecost, as it passed away from under the dying eyes and hands of this very last Apostle left on the earth, who had seen the Lord. What would any one have found who had looked in upon it at the close of the century? What picture would he have painted? What would have been his primary impression? A good deal of detail may be hidden from us, but we can be fairly sure of the broad features that strike the eye, and we can be quite certain of the character of its inner secret.

I. And, first, it would show itself to him as a corporate society, a social brotherhood, a family of God. This family, this brotherhood, he would have discovered, had widely over-spread the empire, and in doing so distinctly followed the line of the Roman imperial system. That system, we know, was a network of municipalities gathered together into metropolitan centres. And the Christian society repeated in its own way, on its own methods, the general feature of this imperial organisation. Its life lay in towns; its ideal was civic; each city in which it established itself was a little centre for the suburban and surrounding districts. It was becoming clear its note was to be catholic. That was the outward society.

II. And inside what did the believer find? He found, first, a fellowship of holy and gracious living. To understand what this meant, try to recall the epistles of St. Paul, for you can feel still throbbing, as we know, in those epistles the unutterable ecstacy of the believers' escape out of what had before been their proverbial and familiar existence. St. Paul bids them keep ever in mind the old days from which they have fled—fled as men fly from a wild and savage beast whose breath has been hot upon them, whose fangs and claws have been, and are still, too terribly near. We may read and enjoy the noble

classical literature in which the old pagan world expressed, through the lips of its prophets and philosophers, its higher aspirations and its cleaner graces; but here in St. Paul we can still touch, and feel, and handle the ghastly history of the common pagan life, such as it was really known in provincial cities. The ideal of holy living, which before had been a weak dream, a dream that became daily more confused and despairing, was now a restored possibility. It had become possible that a whole society, a whole community of men and women, should live together for the purpose of high and clean life, with a positive hope of attaining it. That was the new attraction; that was the great change that had come over the situation—a change from losing to winning. To pass from one state of things to the other was to pass from death into life. It was to them an undying and an unutterable joy.

III. It was a society of holiness, and a society of help, and then a society of help and holiness for all alike, out of every race, and at all social levels. Here, again, we know, was the secret of its power. A career of moral and spiritual holiness opened out to all women and to slaves. And how was it held together? Not by being a society of holiness, or a society of help; but its one indomitable and unswerving article of creed was that all this outward and visible organism was the outcome of a life essentially supernatural, invisible, not of this world, unearthly, spiritual, with which life believers stood in unbroken communion; for in their very midst, moving through the golden candlesticks, was an energising presence, loved as a friend is loved, known and clung to as a Redeemer, worshipped as God Himself is worshipped—One who was as verily near, present, and alive with them as He was in the days of His flesh among the friends whom He had chosen. From His spiritual life they drank their life, united to it as limbs of one body to the head—by inseparable union. Of this unalterable union every good word spoken, every good act done, by each and all, was the true and the natural fruit. This union was sustained by the constant intercourse of worship, and, above all, by that central act in which all worship concentrated itself and round which all services of prayer and praise grouped their office: that act in which the Church on earth ate of the living bread—"the bread of eternal life, of which whosoever eateth shall never die."

H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii., p. 360.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

CHRIST'S Present Love and its Great Act.

I. Consider the ever-present, timeless love of Jesus Christ. John is writing these words of our text nearly half a century after Jesus Christ was buried. He is speaking to Asiatic Christians, Greeks and foreigners, most of whom had not been born when Jesus Christ died, none of whom had probably ever seen Him in this world. To these people he proclaims, not a past love, not a Christ that loved long ago, but a Christ that loves now, a Christ that loved these Asiatic Greeks at the moment when John was writing, a Christ that loves us nineteenth-century Englishmen at the moment when we read. (1) This one word is the revelation to us of Christ's love as unaffected by time. (2) Then, further, that love is not disturbed or absorbed by multitudes. (3) Another thought may be suggested, too, of how this present, timeless love of Christ is unexhausted by exercise. (4) Again, it is a love unchilled by the sovereignty and glory of His exaltation.

II. Notice the great act in time which is the outcome and proof of this endless love. The one act in time which is the proof and outcome of His love is the deliverance from sin by His blood. What a pathos that thought gives to His death! It was the willing token of His love. He gave Himself up to the cross of shame because He held us in His heart. There was no reason for His death but only that "He loveth us." And with what solemn power that thought invests His death! Even His love could not reach its end by any other means—not by mere goodwill, nor by any small sacrifice. Nothing short of the bitter cross could accomplish His heart's desire for men. We have no proof of Christ's love to us and no reason for loving Him except His death for our sins.

III. One final word as to the praise which should be our answer to this great love. Our praise of Christ is but the expression of our recognition of Him for what He is and our delight in, and love towards, Him. Such love, which is but our love speaking, is all which He asks. Love can only be paid by love. Any other recompense offered to it is coinage of another currency. The only recompense that satisfies love is its own image reflected in another heart. That is what Jesus Christ wants of you.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 305.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"And washed us from our sins in His own blood."

Look at the text—

I. As a statement of a fact. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." The reasons for this arrangement are not with the theological reasoners, but they are among the secret things which belong to God. But just as the body is washed by pure water, so are we washed from our sins in Christ's own blood.

II. As the most perfect illustration of Jesus's love. (1) Dying for us was grief, sorrow, self-denial, trouble, a cup of gall to Jesus Christ, just as His temptations were fiery trials. (2) Nothing can be so precious as love thus proved.

III. As a matter of consciousness. "Looking unto Jesus," we begin to hate evil, to be weaned from the love of sin, to love righteousness; we "cease to do evil and learn to do well."

IV. As an incentive to praise and as a theme of praise. Praise is the expression of holy, happy, devout feeling; and such expression must be acceptable to God. Divine revelation is Divine expression. Creation is expression by the absolute and infinite God. "He that offereth praise glorifieth Me."

S. Martin, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 232.

References: i. 5.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 248; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 321; vol. viii., p. 240. i. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1737; W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 146; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 87.

Chap. i., vers. 5, 6.

The Christian Priesthood.

I. It is amongst the most common, and certainly not the least dangerous of the errors of the day, to identify the Church with the clergy, as though the laity were not to the full as much one of its constituent parts. Our common forms of speech both encourage and prove the mistake; for we speak of a man as "designed for the Church" when preparing for the clerical profession, and we speak of him as "entering the Church" when he takes holy orders. The whole Christian community is made up of priests. We are not speaking of what that community may be by practice, but only of what it is by profession; of what it ought to be, and of what it would be if it acted faithfully up to the obligations it had taken on itself. When settled in Canaan, the Jews were far from proving themselves a "kingdom of priests," for they turned

aside after false gods, and dishonoured, in place of magnifying, the name of Jehovah. But supposing them to have been a nation of righteous men, not only outwardly in covenant with God, but consecrated in heart to His service, then it is easy to perceive that they would have stood to all surrounding countries in the very position in which the tribe of Levi stood to themselves; they would have been witnesses for the Almighty to the rest of the world, standing in the midst of the vast temple of the earth and instructing the ignorant in the mysteries of truth. And beyond question what the Jewish nation might have been, that may be the Christian Church; that would it be if its every member acted up to the vows which were made for him at his baptism. Let a parish of nominal Christians be converted into a parish of real Christians, so that there should not be one within its circuit who did not adorn the doctrine of the Gospel; and what should we have but a parish of priests to the high and living God? Christian nations stand in the same position to heathen nations as Christian ministers to Christian congregations. They have much the same duties to perform—the same power of witnessing for God, the same opportunities of supporting the great cause of truth. In the one case as well as in the other there may be a great want of fidelity. The priesthood in the persons of the nation, just as the priesthood in the persons of individuals, may be grievously disgraced, and its obligations forgotten, and its duties not discharged; but all this interferes not with the fact that there has been an ordination, a solemn setting apart to the service of God, whether of a people or an individual.

II. Every man who has been received by baptism into the Christian Church has been invested with a priestly office, and shall be hereafter dealt with according to the manner in which that office has been performed. If the Church as a body is to be a kingdom of priests, it follows that every member of that Church, in his individual capacity, can be nothing less than a priest. The priestly office, indeed, is no longer what it was as regards the ministers of the Church; but it is not one jot altered as regards the members of the Church. It is not what it was as regards the ministers, because they have not to make atonement by the offering up of sacrifice; but it is what it was as regards the members, because their ministrations are still to be those of a holy life and consistency and steadfastness in maintenance of truth.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1707.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"Kings and priests."

I. (1) THE substitution in the Revised Version of "a kingdom" for "kings" places the promises of the new dispensation in direct connection with the facts of the old. The language of St. Peter and St. John was no novel coinage. It was merely an adaptation to the Israel after the Spirit of the titles and distinctions accorded of old to the Israel after the flesh. There was a holy nation, a peculiar people, a regal priesthood, before Christianity. It was only enlarged, developed, spiritualised, under the Gospel. The mention of the kingdom links Sinai with Zion, the old with the new. (2) But also, if we lose the idea of the kingdom, we lose with it the most valuable idea of the passage. A kingdom denotes an organised, united whole; it implies consolidation and harmony. It is not enough that we should realise the individual Christian as a king; we must think of him as a member of a kingdom. Solitariness, isolation, independence—these are ideas inseparable from the kingly throne; but this is not the true conception of the disciple of Christ. He is before all things a member of a body. The kingdom of God, the Church of Christ, exists for a definite end. Its citizen kings have each their proper functions; perform each their several tasks; contribute each their several gifts to the fulfilment of this purpose.

II. And how shall we define this purpose? Will you tell me that the Church was planted for the saving of individual souls—your soul and mine? Will you say that its design was the amelioration of human society? These are only intermediate and secondary objects in its establishment. Its final end and aim is far higher than this. It is nothing less than the praise and glory of God. So the kingdom is a priesthood. Its citizen kings are citizen priests also. Under the old dispensation one nation was selected from all the nations. We are the heirs of its privileges, its functions, its ministrations. A nobler service, indeed, is ours. The theme of our praise and thanksgiving, the human birth, the human life, the passion, the resurrection, of the incarnate Son of God, the theme of all themes, far transcends the conceptions which inspired the worship of the old dispensation. But so far as regards this idea of a kingdom which is also a priesthood, the Church of Christ now is the direct continuance or the immediate development of the Church of the Israelites. Realise your consecration as priests first, and then learn to exercise your priestly functions.

J. B. LIGHTFOOT, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 191.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"And hath made us kings . . . unto God and His Father."

I. THE man who does the will of God rules a kingdom within himself. In one aspect God is the King of the kingdom; in another aspect the Christian himself is king. Self-rule is one of the first lessons which Jesus Christ teaches His disciples, and it is a lesson which is more or less interwoven with all others.

II. The man who lives unto Christ, and who lives for Christ, rules others. (1) By the truth which he has received, and which he avows, he rules thought, opinion, ideas, doctrines, creeds. (2) By the principles upon which he acts the Christian disciple rules the consciences and hearts of other men. (3) By his character the Christian forms and moulds the characters of others. (4) By his conduct the Christian regulates the actions of others.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 251.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"And hath made us . . . priests unto God and His Father."

I. THE sacrifice—what is it? The Christian's sacrifice is himself—himself in work, himself in worship, himself in suffering, himself in the whole of life, and himself in death.

II. What is the altar? The altar of our sacrifice is our opportunity. God gives us the means of rendering others service, and He brings those who require the ministrations of which we are capable under our notice or into personal contact with us. This is the altar of opportunity.

III. What is the temple? The temple in which a Christian serves as a priest is every place in which he lives and moves. Under the Levitical law there was one God-chosen place of sacrifice; under the dispensation of the Gospel the whole earth is hallowed ground.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 263.

Chap. i., ver. 6.—"To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

I. "UNTO Him." Why unto Him? (1) He loved us from everlasting; (2) He has washed us from our sins in His own blood; (3) He has made us kings and priests.

II. "Glory and dominion"—regal rule; imperial rule; rule everywhere; dominion over all; the government seen to be upon His shoulder, the sceptre known to be in His hand, the crown visible on His head.

III. "For ever." How little there is that one would wish to be for ever. What echoes do the words awaken, "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever"!

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 274.

REFERENCES: i. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. 12; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 341. i. 8.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 481; W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 129.

Chap. i., ver. 9.—"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

THE Fellowship of the Kingdom of Patience.

I. The ultimate basis of our fellowship we find where we find everything—"in Jesus," for such is the literal phrase of our text. But it is hard to say here whether the individual or the community comes first. Both are in Jesus; "the Head of every man is Christ," and "He is the Head of the body." Union with the Lord, personal union, is the precious secret and deep foundation of all our fellowship. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The spirit common to Him and to His people makes them partakers with Christ and all His interests, even as Christ becomes a Partaker with us and all that is ours. The Christian is no longer his own; he has come out of himself; he has a new life, breathes in a new world, the sun, and the air, and the nourishment, and the life, and the end of which is the Lord. He is a man still, but a man in Christ.

II. Christ's presence is in the Church of earth; His glory, and ornaments, and symbolic attributes are all taken from the lower sanctuary; His right hand is strong with the power of a human-angel ministry. The candlesticks that receive their light from Him reflect on Him their glory. Hence the fellowship of Christ's kingdom has its sphere in the visible Church or Churches established throughout the world—the Churches, for they are seven; the Church, for seven is, as we see by the seven spirits, the symbol of unity in diversity. All true Churches are one in the unity of this common object: the kingdom of Jesus.

III. Every one of us is a companion in the service of the kingdom of the Cross. Such it is now, whatever its coming glories may be. The service of this kingdom has for its fundamental law personal self-sacrifice; no law was more

constantly, none more sternly, none more affectingly, enforced by our Lord than this. Only by much tribulation do we enter into the kingdom of God; only by much tribulation does it enter into us.

IV. Tribulation worketh patience, is a principle of personal religion which we may carry into our relation to the great fellowship. The kingdom is one of slow development, and all who serve it must wait in patience, which is, like charity, one of its royal laws. Our apocalyptic patience has to do with the future; it is the "waiting for the end." We must labour in the patience of uncertainty. The Lord is at hand; but we must be found labouring as well as watching.

V. The glorious consummation will surely come. The bright prospect precedes our text and sheds its glory on it. "Behold, He cometh!" was the inspiring assurance in the strength of which the last Apostle greeted the Church: "I John, your brother and companion in this hope." Then will the kingdom be revealed without its ancient attributes of tribulation and patience.

W. B. POPE, *Sermons and Charges*, p. 64.

THE Kinghood of Patience.

That is a very remarkable phrase, "the kingdom and patience." Kinghood, instead of being dissevered from patience, is bound up with it; the kingly virtues are all intertwined with patience and dependent on it. The kingdom, the Divine kingdom, is inherited through faith and patience; and the kingly man is the patient man.

I. In Jesus there are these two elements: dominion and patience. Nothing is more beautiful than the patience of Christ as related to His uncompromising fidelity to His standard of duty and of truth, His holding by His principles while He holds on at the same time to those slow, backward pupils in the school of faith and of self-sacrifice. Christ's mission, in its very nature, involved long, patient waiting. It was the mission of a sower, sowing seed of slow growth. The harvest of Christ's ideas was not going to be reaped in three years, nor in a hundred. He was content to await the slow growth of the Gospel seed, the slow pervasion of the Gospel leaven, to wait for the consummation of a sovereignty based on the spiritual transformation wrought by the Gospel. His course in this stands out as the sublimest illustration of patience in all time, and stamps Him as the true King of the ages.

II. Christ therefore by His own example, no less than by His word, commends to us this kingly virtue of patience. Each morning we wake to a twofold fight: with the world outside and with the self within. God help us if patience fail; God help us if there be not something within which keeps firm hold of the exceeding great and precious promises, which will not suffer faith to fail that He that hath begun a good work will perfect it, which is not disheartened at slow progress, and which, spite of the tears and the dust, keeps our faces turned toward the place where we know the crown and the glory are, though we cannot see them.

M. R. VINCENT, *The Covenant of Peace*, p. 234.

Chap. i., ver. 9 (R.V.).—"I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus."

I. NOTE the common royalty: "I John am a partaker with you in the kingdom."

II. Note the common road to that common royalty. "Tribulation" is the path by which all have to travel who attain the royalty.

III. Note the common temper in which the common road to the common royalty is to be trodden. "Patience" is the link, so to speak, between the kingdom and the tribulation.

A. MACLAREN, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 247.

REFERENCES: i. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. i., p. 50. i. 9-16.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 266.

Chap. i., ver. 10.—"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

THE Lord's Day.

I. What is the meaning of the expression, "the Lord's Day"? Does it mean the day of judgment, and is St. John saying that in an ecstacy he beheld the last judgment of God? Undoubtedly "the day of the Lord" is an expression often applied to the day of judgment in the Old and New Testaments, but such a meaning would not serve St. John's purpose here; he is plainly giving the date of his great vision, not the scene to which it introduced him, and just as he says that it took place in the isle of Patmos, thus marking the place, so he says that it was on the Lord's Day, thus marking the time. Does the phrase, then, mean the annual feast of our Lord's resurrection from the dead—our Easter Day? That day, as we know from the Epistle to the Corinthians, we are to keep "not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but

with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"; but it could hardly have served for a date, because in those days, as some time afterwards, there were different opinions in the Church as to the day on which properly the festival should be kept. If the Lord's Day had meant Easter Day, it would not have settled the date of the revelation without some further specification. Does the phrase, then, mean the Sabbath day of the Mosaic law? If St. John had meant the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, he would certainly have used the word "Sabbath"; he would not have used another word which the Christian Church, from the day of the Apostles downwards, has applied, not to the seventh day of the week, but to the first. There is indeed no real reason for doubting that by the Lord's Day St. John meant the first day of the week, or, as we should say, Sunday. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made that day in a special sense His own by rising on it from the dead and by connecting it with His first six appearances after His resurrection.

II. What are the principles which are recognised in the observance of the "Lord's Day" by the Church of Christ? (1) The first principle embodied is the duty of consecrating a certain portion of time, at least one-seventh, to the service of God. This principle is common to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Christian Lord's Day. And such a consecration implies two things: it implies a separation of the thing or person consecrated from all others and a communication to it or him of a quality of holiness or purity which was not possessed before. (2) A second principle in the Lord's Day is the periodical suspension of human toil. This also is common to the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day. The Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day, while agreeing in affirming two principles, differ in two noteworthy respects: (1) they differ in being kept on distinct days; (2) in the reason or motive for observing them. The Christian motive for observing the Lord's Day is the resurrection of Christ from the dead; that truth is to the Christian creed what the creation of the world out of nothing is to the Jewish creed; it is the fundamental truth on which all else that is distinctively Christian rests, and it is just as much put forward by the Christian Apostles as is the creation of all things out of nothing by the Jewish creed. (3) A third principle is the necessity of the public worship of God. The cessation of ordinary work is not enjoined upon Christians only that they may while away the time or spend it in self-pleasing or in something worse. The Lord's Day is the day of

days, on which Jesus our Lord has a first claim. In the Church of Jesus the first duty of the Christian is to seek to hold converse with the risen Lord.

H. P. LIDDON, From the *Christian World Pulpit.*

CHRISTIANITY would seem to have altered the law of the Sabbath precisely where we might have expected it might be altered—in those parts which were of positive, not of moral, obligation. Our Saviour, who, being the coeternal Son of God, is Lord also of the Sabbath day, modified the mode in which it is to be hallowed partly by relaxing the literal strictness of the precept, "Thou shalt do *no* manner of work," and permitting works of necessity and of mercy, but principally by removing the false glosses with which superstition and human traditions had disfigured the true meaning of the commandment.

I. Even if the Decalogue or the Fourth Commandment were abrogated by the Gospel, and the Lord's Day were but a Christian ordinance sanctioned by our Lord, either immediately by His own presence and approval, or mediately by His Apostles acting under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we should still be bound to keep it in the same way as if it were the Sabbath transferred from the old dispensation to the new, if, at least, the early Christians may be admitted as witnesses of the meaning of what on this supposition was their own ordinance. With them the first day of the week was not a day of unnecessary work or a day of amusement, but a holy day, set apart from the rest for special public worship and cheerful thanksgiving. So much, indeed, might be inferred from the very name, "the Lord's Day." Chrysostom, Augustine, and others warned Christians against the example of the Jews of their days who made the Sabbath a time for dancing, banqueting, and luxurious self-indulgence. The truth is, Christians held the first day of the week to be the Lord's Day, and kept it as such, not with idle scrupulosity, but with honesty of purpose. Accordingly any work, however laborious, if necessary or compulsory, they would have done with a quiet conscience; but unnecessary work they would have felt a sin. A slave unable to obtain his freedom would have done his master's bidding unhesitatingly and cheerfully; a free man would not have followed his worldly calling on the Lord's Day. Amusements would have been felt more discordant with the Lord's Day than work. They were not necessary; they could not be compulsory; they had nothing to do with the special service of

God for which that day was hallowed. They were, therefore, simply wrong. "It is commanded you," writes St. Augustine, "to observe the Sabbath spiritually, not as the Jews observe theirs, in carnal ease—for they wish to have leisure for their trifles and their luxuries—for a Jew would be better employed in doing something useful in his field than in sitting turbulently in the theatre."

II. It is a matter of little practical moment, then, the obligation on which our observance of the Sunday rests. Whether it is the primal Sabbath, re-enacted on Sinai and continued in the Christian code with modifications in its positive and non-essential details, or whether it is the Christian ordinance of the Lord's Day to be understood and interpreted by the practice of the early Christians, it is undoubtedly a day set apart and holy to the Lord. It is His special portion of our time, dedicated to Him for His glory and for our good. Its peculiar duties are public worship, religious meditation and instruction, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ. Its spirit is a calm and collected mind, undisturbed by worldly cares and unexcited by worldly amusements, in tune with holy thoughts and the exercises of religion, and open to all the cheerful influences of home and family affection, and charity, and benevolence.

III. With this general principle before us, (1) we must be very slow to judge and very cautious to condemn others for their manner of observing the Lord's Day. They have the same rule with us; they are to apply it by the aid of their own conscience. To their own Master they stand or fall. (2) But though indulgent in our judgment of others, we must not be too indulgent of ourselves. Scruples and nice distinctions, indeed, austerity and gloom, the obedience of the letter, not of the spirit, are alien, it has been said, to the true character of the Christian Lord's Day; and he who is free from such scruples and doubts, as he is always the happiest, will often be the holiest man. A healthy faith and a devout heart will usually discern by a kind of spiritual instinct what may and what may not be done. But the important practical rule for all of us is this: "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind." (3) We must be careful not to impose needless labour on others, and should help and encourage them, as well as we may, to enjoy rest on the day of rest. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, honourable, and

shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

J. JACKSON, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 627.

REFERENCES: i. 10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 267. i. 10-20.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 115. i. 12-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 357.

Chap. i., ver. 13.—**"And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks One like unto the Son of man."**

OBJECTIVE Faith.

I. If we were asked to fix upon the most prominent want in the spiritual life of the present time, we might perhaps not untruly say that it is the want of objective faith. We fail to grasp the realities of the spiritual world, and live in shadows. Visions pass before us, and we believe that in them is our life, but where is the entranced consciousness of their reality? Where is the abiding feeling of their substance, their power? Where is the fresh, warm faith which ever sees One like unto the Son of man moving amid sacraments, and taking the shape of human symbols? Where is the rapturous conviction that pierces at once through the veil of visions and sees the well-known features by a perpetual inspiration? And yet this is undeniably the character of the faith which has drawn the soul to God at all times, and it was to perpetuate this life of faith that in the Revelation our Lord chose symbols wherein to enshrine His presence.

II. Consider some of the bearings of this law of spiritual life. (1) The symbolic visions of the Revelation are an argument in favour of the sacramental teachings of the Church, of the system which represents sacraments as outward forms containing and conveying grace. (2) Again, as objective faith is the means of sustaining the spiritual life, so is it the true antidote of one of the great dangers which beset the soul in times of strong religious excitement: that of morbid self-contemplation. Our safety is to lose our own consciousness in the greater consciousness of the unseen world. (3) Once more, the same truth holds good as to our progress in any single grace. We gain more by looking on what is perfect than by striving against what is imperfect.

T. T. CARTER, *Sermons*, p. 170.

REFERENCES: i. 13.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 343. i. 14.

—Talmage, *Old Wells Dug Out*, p. 231. i. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1533; G. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiv., p. 215.

Chap. i., vers. 17, 18.

The Keys of Hell and of Death.

I. Looking back upon His incarnate course below, our Lord testifies that He, the Eternal, Living One, died in the verity of His human nature. The solemnity and grandeur of this allusion to His death and the wonderful way in which it is connected with His person as the fountain of life conspire to make this testimony of the ascended Lord unspeakably impressive. We cannot but be struck with the fact that, in His review of His past among men, our Lord makes His having died sum up all. It is impossible to do justice to the risen Saviour's words unless we make them the measure of the design of the Incarnation itself. God became man that the Living One might become the dead.

II. "Behold, I," the same who died, "am alive for evermore." Undoubtedly there is here an undertone of triumph over death, such as becomes Him who by dying conquered the last enemy. It is as if the Lord, who confesses that He was dead, asserts that notwithstanding He still and ever lives. In virtue of His essential life, He could not be holden of death, but continued in His incarnate person to live evermore. Having died for mankind, He now lives to be Lord over all, or, as St. Paul says, "Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord of the dead and the living." His own testimony is, "I am alive for evermore." It is His eternal encouragement to His troubled Church and to every individual member of it.

III. No Christian dies but at the time when the Lord appoints. There is a sense in which this is true of every mortal, but there is a very special sense in which the death of His saints is cared for. Their life is precious to Him, and He will see that without just cause it shall not be abridged by one moment. To him who is in Jesus there can be no premature end, no death by accident, no departing before the call from above. The Lord Himself, and in person, opens the door and receives the dying saint.

W. B. Pope, *Sermons and Charges*, p. 19.

Love in the Glorified Saviour.

I. When the Man of sorrows had ceased to walk in sorrow, and He that was acquainted with grief had all tears for ever

wiped from His eyes, do we find that He in any degree laid aside His human sympathies, that He had less love, less compassion, less feeling, for our infirmities? Because, as it seems to me, this was an important crisis in His course. He is lifted far above all personal yearning for human companionship. Receiving the homage of the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, does He still invite to Him, will He still give rest to, the weary and the heavy-laden? This demand of our backward, unready, wayward souls He has fully satisfied. He called Mary by her name, and entrusted her with words of comfort to those whom He still knew as His brethren: that He was ascending to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God. Nor was this the only proof given of His love and sympathy on that memorable day: "Go your way; tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee."

II. We have in the risen Saviour all that our hearts can desire. Not one of His human sympathies has been lost by His resumption of glory; not one of the attributes of Divine omnipotence has been limited by His taking human nature into the Godhead. He remains as He was even when on earth: perfect man. He is in communion with our whole nature. Not a sigh is uttered by any overburdened heart which He does not hear; not a sorrow in the wide world but it touches Him. And herein is the great lesson for our infinite consolation and encouragement: that the Son of God, high as He is above all might, and majesty, and power, is not too high to be a dear Friend to every one among us; that love can never die; that among the glories of the Godhead itself it is uneclipsed, not obscured, but is highest in the highest, and of men, and of angels, and of God Himself, is the brightest crown and the most blessed perfection.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 189.

THE Living Christ.

This sublime apocalypse is the climax of revelation. It carries us forward from narrative to prophecy, from facts to truths, from present conditions to permanent issues. It crowns the story of redemptive agencies with a vision of redemptive achievements. It is a book of completions, of finishing touches, of final results. It takes up the broken threads of history, and weaves them into the fabric of eternity. It turns our gaze from what has been and is around us, to what is and shall be before us. Above all, it advances our thought from the Christ of

history to the Christ of eternity. It translates for us the Man of sorrows into the crowned and conquering Lord of a supreme spiritual empire.

I. This text is Christ's new introduction of Himself to the Church militant, an introduction of Himself from above to His disciples left below. It is the revelation of Himself in His lordship, clothed with the authority and resource of spiritual empire. On His head are many crowns; in His hands are the keys of mastery; to His service yield all God's powers. But I want you to note that right in the centre of this shining vision the old familiar Christ of the Gospels is made clearly discernible. Not only does He introduce Himself as the Living One with the keys, but as the One who became dead, the One therefore who lived and moved within the range of men's observation. Christ was not content to show Himself in His glory, endowed with the splendour of Divine power. He was careful to claim His place on the field of history, to reaffirm His identity as the Son of man, to revive the facts of His incarnate life, and to link what He is in heaven to what He was on earth. The human brow is visible through the Divine halo. The hand that grasps the sceptre bears the nail-marks of the tragedy. His eyes, albeit that John saw them as flaming fires, recall the tear-drops which fell at Bethany and over Jerusalem. And it is the Christ Himself that throws into promise these lineaments of His humanity. He permits us to look at His crown, but while as yet we turn to look at it He lifts before us the vision of His cross, He unveils for us the splendours of His throne, ay, and He bids us to look at the steps which led up to it and at the inscriptions which they bear, and the heavenly writing spells Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, Calvary, Olivet.

II. The historic Christ, who lived, spake, worked, died, and rose again in our midst, is our ultimate ground of verification for the great spiritual truths and hopes which inspire and quicken us to-day. We are asked to believe that it is possible for us to be just and to believe in lofty and generous thoughts of God and man which to-day happily fill the Church—we are told we can believe these apart from history; we can accept them as sentiments kindled in us by the direct operation of the Spirit of God. There is a truth in the assertion, but only a half-truth. For in the last analysis of things my faith in these high truths about God and about man runs back for verification to the life God lived amongst us and the sacrifice which He wrought in our behalf.

III. But the text tells us we must not stop there, that the Christ of history is only the beginning, that the cross of Christ is only the finger-post that Christ is yonder and lives, that Christ is here inside and lives, and that the faith of Christ bids us turn from distant history when we have built upon it to find Christ here and now, a living presence in our own hearts and in the world. The grand and fatal blunder of evangelical theology is that it stops with the cross of Calvary, stops before Christ. It forgets that He rose again and lives; it forgets that, while by His death we are reconciled to God, it is by His life that we are saved. It forgets, or is only beginning now adequately to remember, that, while our great structure of faith rests upon solid foundations on the earth, it builds and caps its towers away up in the heavens. It will not do for you and me to stand on the slopes of Olivet gazing up at the departing Christ, or our conception of Christ and of His Gospel, and our character, experience, and hope, will suffer disastrous impoverishment. The men of Galilee had all the facts of Christ's life, and after the Resurrection they had some appreciation of their meaning and scope. But they had no adequate Gospel, they had no large and compelling Christian life, until the Christ of eternity revealed Himself unto them. Although Christ's last words to His disciples were, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth; go ye out and preach," He immediately checked Himself and said, "Not yet; not yet: tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." And that power was the vision of Christ, that pentecostal baptism of the risen Lord, that personal experience of Christ's return and indwelling.

C. A. BERRY, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 49.

REFERENCES: i. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1028; W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 187; W. Brock, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 312; A. M. Fairbairn, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 97; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 269.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

DEATH.

Death has been scoffingly called the preacher's commonplace, but a commonplace truth, like a commonplace person, is often only a name for one with whose appearance we are very familiar, and whose character we are too indolent to probe. We limit the word "dissipation" in our moral phraseology to

one or two particular forms of self-destruction; but in scientific language our whole existence is one long dissipation of energy. Life is but an episode in the universe of dying.

I. Dying may be converted into a daily sacrifice, offered up to love. First, there is the very exuberance of life's energy and joy. Indulge that to the utmost in the lust of the flesh and as the pride of life, and its speedy end will be decay of the body, decay of the affections, decay of the mind; but sacrifice your flesh by discipline, in communion with your Lord, and you will gather daily fresh strength of body, and with it of mind and of affection, to be converted into fresh channels, and in its turn to be employed, not as an instrument of pleasure, but of usefulness and work.

II. Turn to the intellectual life, and you will find it fraught with the same double possibilities of death and sacrifice. Use thought as a means to pleasure, and it will crumble at your touch, and you will die murmuring the foolish murmur, "There is one end to the wise man and to the fool." Sacrifice it to the help of others, cost the sacrifice what it may, and Wisdom will be justified of her children, for they will have learned that she is a loving spirit.

III. For the life of thought carries us on once more to the life of love. Turn round upon and accept the limitations of love, and offer them in sacrifice, and by sacrificing overcome them. Christ has sacrificed life, and thought, and love to you, that you may receive back the love you gave Him with the addition of that infinite love which is His essence, and all the thought you gave Him made perfect in His infinite wisdom, and the life that you gave up to Him translated into His eternal life of glory.

J. R. Illingworth, *Sermons*, p. 1.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"I . . . have the keys of hell and of death."

The text shows—

I. That we must look higher than a natural agency for the account of the death of a single individual. Of course here, as in other departments of His administration, our Lord works by second causes. Disease, violence, and natural decay are His instrumentality. But who calls the instrumentality into play? Who sets it at work? Who first touches the hidden spring? Undoubtedly the great Redeemer. Death is a solemn thing, a thing of vast moment, and cannot be decreed except immediately by Him. The key is in His hand exclusively; the great

summons goes forth from His presence, and is spoken by His lips. The Jewish doctors have a saying that there be three keys which God reserves exclusively for Himself: the key of rain, the key of birth, and the key of death. We Christians will accept the proverb, only observing that this authority is at present delegated to One who is Partaker at the same time of two whole and perfect natures—of the manhood no less than of the Godhead.

II. Again, death is often regarded in the mass, and on a large scale, a view which derogates altogether from its awfulness and solemnity. Death is the transaction of an Individual with an individual, of Christ the Lord with one single member of the human family. For every individual the dark door turns afresh upon its hinges.

III. Death is no way the result of chance. The death of each person is predestined and forearranged. Christ Himself trod the dark avenue of death; He Himself passed into the realm of the unseen. There are His footsteps all along the path, even where the shadows gather thickest round it, as there were the footsteps of the priests all along the deepest bed of Jordan. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

E. M. GOULBURN, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 241.

THE Keys of Hell and of Death: an Easter Day Sermon.

It is our risen Saviour's own grand chant of victory; it is our living Lord's own loving assurance to His Church of what that resurrection life shall be to us. And He puts to it His own "Amen." To every other truth we place that seal, but to this only He. And He only can who knows the power of that risen life. And therefore His own heart seals what His own hand hath done, that it may be His Church's portion: "Amen." "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." You will observe that Christ uses an expression which confines this particular character of life to Himself: "I am He that liveth, and was dead," the One only "dead" who "lives."

I. It is the risen life of Christ to which we are united, and by which we live. The previous life of Christ on the earth was rather the life of substitution. The life which He took from this day is the representative life; that is, it is our life. Is not it a true Easter thought, a child of resurrection, that we ought to be happy, very happy, much happier than we are, if

only for no other reason but because Jesus, the Jesus we copy, rose to happiness, and is a "Man of joy"? This day we commemorate the greatest triumph that the universe has ever seen. Into the great empire of the prince of darkness, Christ, Christ in His solitary strength, without man or angel, made His bold invasion; He penetrated into the very strongholds of his power; He crushed his "head"; He bore away the insignia of his kingdom; and when He came back again, this day, He held in His hand "the keys" of all Satan's empire. The door of paradise, so iron-bound by its once cruel devastator, was unlocked and thrown wide open. The sword which fenced it lay buried in His breast; and the power over all the deep and the horrid walls of eternal misery was vested in Jesus only. There is no prisoner but he who is "the prisoner of hope," no death but the death which is the seed of life, no sorrow that can pass the threshold of this little life, and no power to sin or fall again when once we enter there!

II. By the same power and pledge even now, it is He, and He alone, who can undo the iron shutters and the fast-bound chains of some dark, hard heart, and let in the light of truth and the sunshine of pardon and peace. It is He, and He alone, who can "bind the strong man" in a sinner's heart, and bid the man go forth into the free ranges of that large "liberty wherewith He makes His people free." And I love to know that it is He who holds already "the keys." For who so well as He, our Brother, who has gone through all life and all death, and has sympathy with all, and who has proved what it is to live in such a world as this, with all its sufferings and all its sorrows, and what it is to die, and to be buried, and to lie in the dark, cold tomb, and to come out of it to live again, and to walk our paradise, and to enter our heaven, and to live there that human life of which He trod every step in its proper order, from the cradle to the tomb and from the tomb to the throne—who like Him could be a real presence in life, in death, in the grave, in paradise, in eternity, who can, in the exactness of His own perfect truth, say, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death"?

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, p. 126.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

THE Life of the Ascended Christ.

I. It is very hard for us to realise the truth that Christ lives

the same in will and nature as when He stilled the waves on Galilee and raised the widow's son from the dead, not because His living still is a mystery before which the stubborn reason refuses to bow, but only because, in spite of His Gospel and the many triumphs of the Christian faith, the world is still so heathen. The wheat grows, and with it the tares, and the tares grow rank and strong, and the harvest is not yet. But such discouragements to faith have always been since Christ first came on earth, and our remedy against the overwhelming mass of evil that is in the world lies in our individual personal warfare against it. Stand idle in the world's market-place, and everything is dark, and hope has fled. Take service under the Master of the vineyard against one evil influence, lay but one idol in the dust, feel that the kingdom of righteousness numbers you also among its subjects, and then, though a cloud has before hid the ascended Saviour from your sight, lo! the vision of Stephen is repeated: you see the heavens open and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

II. Should a visitor go his way and say, "I came to see how Christ looked in a Christian country, and I found many spurious Christs and many miscalled gospels, but the Christ of St. Luke and St. John I did not find," why he speaks but idle words; for wherever there is at work the Spirit of righteousness there is the Son of man, the ascended, the ever-living Christ, not in the sects, not in our little systems, which are born and perish in a day, not in the petty cobwebs men may spin, but in a million inarticulate prayers, in the numberless acts, and words, and thoughts of righteousness and love that every day go up to heaven from obscure saints, men and women struggling to be true and good against temptations to be bad of which we can form no idea. "Behold, I am alive for evermore."

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 310.

THE God-Man in Glory.

The glorified humanity of Christ in heaven is the source of encouragement and stimulus to His people amid the trials and conflicts of earth. Not to John only, but to all His people, and not in reference to any one source of fear, but in reference to the whole of their spiritual conflict, Christ says, "Fear not: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

I. The position of the believer here is one of conflict. Christ, it is true, has called him to peace. But this peace is peace

with God; peace of conscience; peace in the prospect of judgment and eternity; peace in the order and harmony of a restored moral nature. It is not peace with sin; it is not peace with Satan; it is not peace with the empire of darkness. All these are the enemies of God and of Christ, and no man can enter into a covenant of peace with God through Christ without finding himself by that very act placed in a position of antagonism to all the powers and principles of evil. Hence the Christian life is constantly compared to a warfare, for which believers are to be constantly prepared, and in which they are steadfastly to persist.

II. Why is the human nature of Christ exalted to the throne of heaven? (1) He is there as the assurance of the acceptance of His work. The work of Christ was the work which the Father had given Him to do, and it was in human nature that He undertook to do it. He is there because He finished the work which the Father had given Him to do. (2) Christ is in heaven in human nature to attest the perpetual sufficiency of His one sacrifice. He has offered His body unto God as a living sacrifice, and now there is no more offering for sin. (3) Christ is in heaven in glorified human nature as the pledge and promise of the final redemption of all that are His. (4) He is not only in the heavenly glory in our nature, but He is there in that nature to prosecute the work of our final redemption.

W. L. ALEXANDER, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 273.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"Behold, I am alive for evermore."

I. How is the perpetuity of Christ in heaven connected with the work of our justification? The priesthood of Christ being perpetual, yet employing but a single sacrificial act, it must consist in a constant reference to that sacrifice of which His own blessed person stands in heaven as the undying memorial. The interests of the universe are dependent on His fiat, yet, amidst all those complicated interests, He is still a Man and busy for men. The human heir of eternal life is regarded as something altogether peculiar and consecrated. Angels look forward with eager interest to the hour when they who by so singular a connection are now "one in Christ" shall enter into the visible unity of His eternal kingdom.

II. But in relation to His overthrow of sin the eternal life of Christ is yet more distinctly the fountain of blessing to us in being the immediate source, not only of justification, but of

holiness, not only of gracious acceptance into the favour of God, but of all the bright train of inward graces by which that favour effectuates itself in us. On Christ's life is suspended the prostration of moral evil in the universe. It shall continue to exist, but only as the dark monument of His triumph; it shall exist, but in chains of feebleness and defeat.

III. Christ is alive as the eternal Conqueror and Antagonist of sin and death. Christ, Himself exalted to glory, fixes the barriers to the energies of pain and death; annihilates not the foe, but imprisons him; makes him the accursed minister of His own dread vengeance, and publicly manifests to the universe that, if misery exists, it exists only as a permitted agent in the awful administration of God. He, the source of life, is still predominant over all and known to be so, known yet more deeply to be so as the life He gives is mantling around Him into intenser glory. Life and happiness again are one, for happiness is bound up in the very essence and nature of the life that Christ bestows; they are inseparable as substance and quality, as the surface and its colour.

W. ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, 1st series, p. 164.

REFERENCES: i. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 894; J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 389; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 220.

Chap. i., ver. 20.—"The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."

NOTE the fitness of the symbol of the golden candlestick.

I. In its position. The golden candlestick stood within the Holy of holies, hidden from the view of all without by the curtain, formed in blending shades of blue, scarlet, and purple, curiously embroidered with figures of cherubim. The high-priest was guided by its soft yet steady light when he entered the holy place once every year to make atonement for the sins of the people. The Church of Christ still waits without the veil, and sheds a blessed light to show the world the Saviour.

II. Again, the symbol of the golden candlestick reminds us very beautifully of the office of the Church. It does not sanctify, nor save, but it does hold forth the true light and shed its brightness on a darkened world. The Holy of holies had no window to let in the light, and had the golden candlestick been taken away, or its lamps left untrimmed, all would have been

profoundest darkness. How eloquently does this symbol speak of the necessity for the Church to stand up as the light-bearer of Him who is "the Light of the world."

III. The golden candlestick symbolically taught the unity of the Church. The seven branches were not separate lamp-bearers, but parts of the same candlestick, the seven lights all blending harmoniously into one. And so with the several apostolic branches of the Holy Catholic Church: all belong to Christ, and borrow light from Him.

IV. Again, the symbolical teaching of the text points out the source of life to the Church. Day by day the golden lamp was supplied with fresh oil by the attendant priest—oil made from olives bruised in a mortar. Even the consecrated lamp, set apart for the uses of the sanctuary, required to be constantly fed. In like manner the Church would be left in darkness and gloom should the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit be withdrawn.

V. The symbol suggests the beauty of the Church and its holy services.

VI. The image of the text reminds us of the value of the Church.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 105.

REFERENCE: i. 20.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 202.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—"Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

FROM Whom the Epistle Comes.

I. The form that John beheld in the opening vision, and at whose feet he fell down as dead, was that of the glorified Jesus, arrayed as a royal Priest, holding seven stars in His right hand. The holding has energy in it; none can pluck them out of His hand. These stars are explained to be the angels of the Churches. Through them as chosen agency the Lord is pleased to impart light to the Churches. The fact that the Lord holds the stars in His right hand seems to symbolise that they belong to Him, are dependent upon Him for their place and lustre, are His gift for the illumination of His people, and give Him pleasure by their clear shining. They are not like torches, consuming their own substance and speedily going out; they derive their light from the source of light.

II. The main idea to be apprehended from the symbol of a

golden candlestick is that a Church is designed to hold up and hold forth the word of life. It is not merely that individual believers are lights in the world and ought to let their light shine, but a Church viewed as a community ought to do so. This design is to be carried out in part by the various arrangements and methods whereby a public exhibition is made of the Gospel. These methods may be included under the general head of preaching, which is the proclamation of the Gospel without selecting your audience, and irrespective of moral condition, culture, social rank, nationality, geographical limits, or any other distinction between man and man.

III. The Lord walketh in the midst of the candlesticks. This walking in the midst implies inspection. But we must not be misled, as if this inspection were designed only for a terror and a check to evil. The Lord's searching eye is welcome to the believer. Knowing this, we may not only be willing to have His light shine in upon us, but we may well pray that He would search and know our heart, in order that He may lead us in the way everlasting.

J. CULROSS, *Thy First Love*, p. 14.

I. WE have in this symbol important truths concerning the Churches and their servants. Note (1) that the messengers are rulers. They are described in a double manner: by a name which expresses subordination and by a figure which expresses authority. I need not do more than remind you that throughout Scripture, from the time when Baalam beheld from afar the star that should come out of Jacob and the sceptre that should rise out of Israel, that has been the symbol for rulers. It is so notably in this book of Revelation. (2) The messengers and the Churches have at bottom the same work to do. Stars shine, so do lamps. So all Christian men have the same work to do. The ways of doing it differ, but the thing done is one. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for the same purpose: to do good with. And we have all one office and function, to be discharged by each in his own fashion—namely, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (3) Again, observe the Churches and their messengers are alike in their religious condition and character. There is such a constant interaction and reciprocal influence that uniformity results. Either a living teacher will, by God's grace, quicken a languid Church, or a languid Church will, with the devil's help, stifle the life of the teacher.

II. Note the Churches and their work. (1) The Church is to be light—light, silent, gentle, and itself invisible. (2) The Church's light is derived light. (3) It is blended or clustered light.

III. The text shows us the Churches and their Lord. He is with them to hold up and to bless. His unwearied hand sustains, His unceasing activity moves among, them. He is with us to observe, to judge, and, if need be, to punish. Let us hold fast by the Lord, whose blood has purchased, and whose presence preserves through all the unworthiness and the lapses of men, that Church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 150.

To Whom the Epistle is Sent.

The letter to Ephesus is addressed "unto the angel of the Church." It is an unwarranted inference that Christ is hereby putting the Church at a distance. He is simply employing the most natural instrumentality that could under the circumstances be employed to communicate with them and to restore them to their first love.

I. Who or what, then, was the angel of the Church of Ephesus? According to one view, he was a purely spiritual being, appointed of the Lord to be the guardian or ministering angel of that particular Christian community. A second view makes the angel of the Church a purely ideal figure or personification, having no real, but only an imaginary, existence, and intended, in a highly symbolical book, to denote the manner of spirit characterising the particular Christian community. A powerful objection to both these views is that a letter, written with pen and ink on paper or parchment, is required to be put into the hands of the angel, to be communicated to the Church, which could not be done if he were a celestial being or a mere ideal personification or symbol.

II. Without entering into discussion, I can say that we must regard the angel as a name either for the eldership collectively, or for a single individual occupying a place of service and responsibility under Christ, and the natural channel of communication with the Church—in all likelihood a lowly, undistinguished man. He who knows and believes the great message of the Gospel has a right to tell it forth and expound it to his fellow-men. I do not say that he has a right to be listened to that is for the hearer to judge. The man to whom the Lord

gives fitness for this service and whom He calls to it is in so far the Lord's "angel" or messenger; and in each of the seven Churches there was, as a matter of fact, one such man as Christ's minister, known and acknowledged to be such by his brethren. The letter, however, while it is directed to the angel and while it undoubtedly touches him first, is not a personal and private one. It is for universal use. Every age needs it, and every age is summoned to listen.

J. CULROSS, *Thy First Love*, p. 1.

REFERENCE: ii. 1-7.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 186.

Chap. ii., vers. 2, 3.

WHAT Christ approves in Ephesus.

These words disclose the Lord's marvellous generosity. He is quick to see and ready to acknowledge all the good that exists among His people; in this how different from many that speak in His name, and who are perpetually engaged in fault-finding and depreciation. Even where we err, we may ask Him to overrule and bless our very blunders.

I. First the Lord says, "I know thy works." There is to be no dealing with us in the dark, as man is oftentimes compelled to deal with his fellow-man. He brings us into the light. The true knowing of a man's work involves the knowing of the heart, inasmuch as the quality of the work depends on the motive. It is because of this that even our own works are so ill understood by us. There are dim, half-lighted chambers of thought into which we have not penetrated with all our self-scrutiny, and a cunning self-complacency gives everything a turn in our own favour. The Lord knows all our works.

II. Opening out His initial statement, the Lord says, "I know thy labour and patience." (1) One department of labour is Christian learning; (2) a second thought is the labour involved in spreading the Gospel; (3) standing out as the grandest of all things is the doing of Christ's will in our daily life.

III. The Gospel is essentially intolerant—intolerant, not merely of evil in the abstract, but of evil men. Such men we must learn to "try" as the Ephesian Church did. And if they are liars, then, whatever their professions of zeal, spirituality, or holiness, we must reject them.

IV. The patience of Ephesus is commended. Christian patience is not the result of a process of deadening the sensibilities. There is nothing stoical in it, no pretence that we do not feel, but the hardihood that is associated with the keenest

capacity of suffering, and that has its root in a firm confidence in God.

J. CULROSS, *Thy First Love*, p. 27.

REFERENCE: ii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1069.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

WHAT was Wrong in Ephesus.

I. The spectacle Ephesus presented was that of a Church working most laboriously and patiently, the machinery kept steadily in motion, all at work and always at work, but with waning love, the fires going down. The word "somewhat" in our English version suggests that the evil was comparatively slight. In point of fact, however, there is no "somewhat" in the original, and the charge is really a very grave and serious one: "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." It is as if the doctor, called in to prescribe for what you deem a trifling ailment, should startle you by pronouncing, "There is disease of the heart."

II. How is this decline of love to be accounted for? The answer must vary according to the case. In the onset we must be clear about this: that it is not due to any capricious action on the part of Christ, to any unaccountable desertion of the soul by Him, to any arbitrary hiding of Himself behind a veil, far less to any change in His heart. (1) One man tries to retain the joy of conversion all his days, without making any progress or seeking anything beyond. A kind of fitful emotion is kindled, a flashing up of affection with vows of fresh consecration and a better life, followed in a little while by apathy and gloom, and he resigns himself helplessly to let things take their course. This cause of declension is operating to-day more widely and subtly than many of us think. (2) Another cause of waning love is the abuse of self-examination. It is beset with many and most subtle dangers. (3) Again, a Christian man becomes absorbed in worldly pursuits and enjoyments. He has no time for spiritual pursuits, for meditation, for making acquaintance with things unseen and eternal. Can any one be surprised that he loses his first love? Would it not be a miracle if he kept it? Or again, there are worldly friendships, followed in no long space by worldly conformity. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

J. CULROSS, *Thy First Love*, p. 62.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 217; *Ibid.*,

Evening by Evening, p. 42. ii. 4, 5.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1926.

Chap. ii., ver. 5.—"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

THE Cure of what was Wrong.

How shall old, faded love be revived? In reply to this question, a great many plans have been proposed and urged, while the Lord's own method has been either overlooked or perversely set aside. The directions He gives are few and simple, but they go to the very core of the matter, whether it be a single individual who has left his first love or a whole Church. Let us mark the things that He names, and the order in which He names them. Memory, conscience, will, are called into play.

I. "Remember whence thou art fallen." That is sure to be painful, but it is the first step towards healing. There was a better estate, an estate that has been left by thine own fault; thou art "fallen" from it. Remember this better estate; call it up again into memory; live the old days over again, those days of heaven upon earth when the name of Jesus sounded so sweetly in your ears, and joy dwelt in your soul. Take the best of them, the most heavenlike of them, and in thought live them over again. This is one of the most blessed uses of memory, and it is the first step in a return to first love.

II. "And repent." This is the Lord's second word of direction. It is an absolutely vital word. He who summons to repentance will see to it that nothing of needful grace is lacking. He "gives" repentance, and we are to take this for granted without need of argument, however dull or insensible our hearts may have become. This word "repent" is one of the profoundest words in the Bible, however superficially modern evangelism or modern legalism may deal with it. It does not indicate mere regret, such as may be caused by the consequence of our actions. That regret may be the beginning of good, but of itself it is not repentance. Repentance is a change in the mind. It implies a true sense of sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. It is the turning of the inner being from sin to God.

III. The Lord's third word is this, "And do the first works." They might seem at Ephesus to have ground for saying, "We hvae never ceased working from the very beginning," and in a

sense they had not. But their works were not the same as at first; in a measure the love was out of them, the love that not merely made them vital, but gave them beauty in the Lord's sight. The summons to do the first works is, therefore, a summons to begin, as it were, over again, throwing love into every deed. To secure compliance He adds this word of warning: "Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." He will bring salutary fear into play as well as gratitude, love, and hope. It is not loss of the soul that is threatened, but loss of the privilege of usefulness and the suppression of them as a Church. The sure way to ruin and extinguish a Christian Church as a light in the world is that it should lose its love.

J. CULROSS, *Thy First Love*, p. 86.

BACKSLIDING.

Those who have fallen in the Church and those who are fallen from the Church are both to be found in the midst of us. The world abounds with backsliders in heart and in life; and if the census could be taken of the multitudes now irreligious, of the prayerless households and Sabbathless families, the result would be something absolutely appalling.

Consider—I. Some of the ordinary causes of falling: (1) adverse or persecuting influence brought to bear upon the soul; (2) an overweening attachment to the present world; (3) self-confidence; (4) a neglect of secret intercourse with God. Only the heart that has renewed its strength on the mount can maintain its consistent walk with the multitude and its influential citizenship in the world, and it is certain that many of the temptations under whose terrible pressure so many are apt to yield would either be entirely disarmed, or would assail with diminished power, if the soul were strengthened from the onset by secret fellowship and prayer.

II. The signs that it has taken place. The Scriptures speak of individuals who may have left their first love, while many of the characteristics of a religious profession continue to be maintained, backsliders in heart, who hang on as useless encumbrances to a Church from which their affections are estranged. Minor apostacy prepares the way for greater; the restraints of conscience once violated, the gap grows wider and wider; easy is the descent to perdition, and you are speeding thither. Your only safety is in a renewed application to the Saviour, who has promised to heal your backslidings and to love you freely. W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 51.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."

WHAT was Hopeful in Ephesus.

At a first glance this verse seems out of its place. It looks like a part of the Lord's commendation that had been forgotten at the proper moment, and is now mentioned as an afterthought. A little reflection, however, shows that it occupies its proper place, and it carries force from this very fact. Here is, so to speak, a starting-point for return to first love. This very "hatred" will make the revival of love the easier. Let them be encouraged and take heart and hope accordingly.

I. I do not think we can speak with much certainty about Nicolaitanism. We may set it down as a heathenish mode of life under a Christian designation, turning the grace of God into licentiousness, a reconciling of Christian faith with the practice of fleshly lusts, or Antinomian principles.

II. The Ephesian believers had not been poisoned by that false and deadly charity which speaks smooth and honeyed things to sin, and stands on friendly terms with it. They "hated" the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, and we are to take the word "hate" in its full force as the opposite of love. Coexistent with hatred of their deeds, there doubtless was compassion for the men themselves and some endeavour to save them.

III. Christ hates as well as loves. He would not be perfect if He did not; He would lack one of the most regal qualities of His nature. The angel of the Church of Ephesus was at one with Christ in hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes; and this, so far as it went, was a token of vitality and vigour in the Church's system, and it formed a starting-point for return to first love. It was not merely a good sign, but a good thing. Once let a Church or an individual cease to be shocked by Nicolaitane deeds, make light of them, wink at them, apologise for them, and the downward course is all but certain. On the other hand, so long as evil is sternly hated, there is not merely the possibility, but the hope, of returning first love, with all that this restoration involves. J. CULROSS, *Thy First Love*, p. 95.

REFERENCE: ii. 6.—W. Arnot, *Good Words*, vol. iii., pp. 189-191.

Chap. ii., ver. 7.—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

THE Promise to the Overcomer.

I. In Ephesus the special evil to be contended against was

the waning of first love. The overcomer, therefore, in Ephesus, would be the man who rose above the tendencies to waning love, the man in whose heart love continued, not merely to abide, but to deepen and intensify. Health and strength might fail, inducing physical languor; age might come stealing on, with its feebleness and loss of enjoyment; but even unto death would love continue, profounder, and more ardent, and more fit for service and sacrifice in the end than the beginning, able to take up the glorious challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

II. To this victor, loving on in spite of deadening and benumbing influences, a very great promise is given. The promise is announced with the utmost solemnity, in the hearing of the whole Church, in order that all might be inspired for the conflict, the promise of blissful and glorious, if yet mysterious reward, not as bribe, but as hope set before them. The doctrine of reward is really a further disclosure of the infinite generosity of Christ, and is fitted to captivate the heart. In suspecting the doctrine, we are really mistrusting, if not blaming, Christ Himself.

III. The Christian victor shall eat of fruit that grows in the paradise of God; the overcomer shall enjoy a Divinely sustained and everlasting life. While the life eternal in its beginnings is a present possession of the believer in Jesus, yet in its glorious fulness, or what Jesus calls its abundance, it shall be also the future reward of him that overcometh. What we are sure of is that body, soul, and spirit shall all share in the perfectness of the redemption; and that the perfected and triumphant life of love shall have suitable nourishment, Divinely provided and supplied, in the fruit of the tree of life. The very mystery of the promise enkindles desire, and gives intensity to the prayer, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

J. Culross, *Thy First Love*, p. 103.

The Tree of Life.

We always look with great interest on any representation of a future state of things which borrows its imagery from the paradise wherein our first parents were placed. There is nothing which more assures us how complete will be the final triumph of the Redeemer than sketches of the thorough restoration of what sin hath destroyed or defaced, so that the garden of Eden shall again blossom in all its loveliness, and be once more filled with its sacramental mysteries. The question

is not whether these sketches are accurate delineations of what is yet to occur. They may be only employed as parables, and not to be literally interpreted. But the mere fact that representations of the future are given in what may be called the language of paradise does always seem to us a most striking proof that the effects of redemption shall at last be commensurate with those of apostacy; so that there is nothing of what the one hath lost which shall not be finally recovered through the other. Let this globe resume its lost place among the morning stars of the universe, let its first verdure return, and everything like discord and unhappiness be banished from its habitations, and then will there be a demonstration such as can hardly be given on any other supposition that Christ Jesus hath effected the very purpose for which He was "manifested"—namely, "that He might destroy the works of the devil."

I. Our text is a beautiful instance of the employment of what we call the imagery of paradise. Our Lord Himself is the Speaker. He is addressing the Church of Ephesus, which, though still presenting many things for which it gains commendation, had somewhat declined from its first love, and needed, therefore, to be bidden to remember from whence it had fallen —to "repent and do the first works." And Christ would encourage the Ephesians to the attempting of the recovery of the ground which has been lost by speaking to them of the recompense which is laid up for the righteous: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." The Christian life must be a warfare: a constant battle has to be maintained with "the world, the flesh, and the devil"; but "to him that overcometh"—to him who perseveres to the end, "fighting the good fight of faith"—to him "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

II. We must not forget that our text refers to the heavenly state. The paradise in the midst of which is the tree of life is the final dwelling-place of those who shall overcome in the "good fight of faith." Therefore we must not illustrate the matter under review by reference to what belongs only to our present condition. Yet who shall say that what is figuratively set forth by the combination of the river and the tree will not equally hold good in our eternal inheritance? Rather, since it is in our eternal inheritance that the combination is represented as subsisting, we are bound to believe that the river, whose streams shall "make glad the city of our God," will be bordered hereafter, as it is now, by the tree of life; in other words, that

Christ and the Spirit will never be separated from the experience and the happiness of the Church. The occupation and gladness of eternity shall greatly consist, we may believe, in the searching more deeply into the mysteries of redemption and comprehending more and more that love which will always pass knowledge. Now we see only through a glass, darkly; and dim and feeble are our apprehensions of that magnificent scheme which perhaps includes the whole universe of animated beings in that unlimited mercy which held nothing too costly that this scheme might be perfected. But hereafter, in the manhood of our faculties and in possession of eternal life, we shall be admitted into acquaintance with the height, and depth, and breadth of the Atonement; and we shall be able at last so to climb, and penetrate, and explore, as vastly to outstrip our present feeble progress, though the result of every advance may be that untravelled immensity is still stretching beyond. And why may we not suppose that in these our lofty and glorious researches we shall be aided by the Spirit who now "takes of the things of Christ and shows them" to the soul?

III. But the Evangelist John tells us yet more of this tree of life—more by which he encourages us in the endeavour to overcome all the enemies of our salvation. It may be that wherever the river rolls only one species of tree is found on its banks; nevertheless there is no sameness, for we are told of this tree that it bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields fruit every month. It is not, surely, for us to suppose the number of twelve is the exact number of fruits which are produced. The number is evidently given with reference to the length of the year, that we may know that the tree, unlike every other tree, yields fruit at all seasons, and is at no time barren—a beautiful emblem of the Lord our Redeemer! He is represented as the tree of life, inasmuch as He is the root whence every order of being derives its animation. But He is also the tree of life to sinners who have banished themselves from paradise, where that tree was first planted. The grand thing for us to be satisfied of in reference to the Redeemer is that there is in Him a supply for our every necessity. If He be the tree of life, we must be able to obtain from Him whatever we require as candidates for immortality. And what can more admirably affirm that He is such a tree than the saying that it bears twelve manner of fruits and yieldeth fruit every month? This is certainly a description, if any can be, of the largeness and fulness of the Mediator's office. This sets before us the

Mediator as offering to every individual case exactly what is suited to its circumstances. We do not believe that the variety and sufficiency which we can now find in the Mediator shall have ceased in another state of being. There will not, indeed, be precisely the same wants to satisfy, nor the same desires to appease; and therefore neither do we suppose that precisely the same fruits will hang on the branches of the tree. But this is only saying that the fruits change with the season. Why should they be the same beneath the cloudless shinings of eternity as amid the bleak winds of time? Nevertheless there may be a great variety, and yet there may still be the twelve manner of fruits. There are to be degrees in heaven hereafter, each being happy up to the full measure of his capacity, but the capacity of one differing from that of another, as "one star differeth from another star in glory." Why may not this be represented by the twelve manner of fruits? Why may we not think that when the tree of life grows in the midst of the celestial paradise—for we read of no other tree, though every species were found in the terrestrial—and when this is represented as yielding varieties of produce, why may we not think that it is a figurative declaration that Christ will hereafter fill the capacities of the whole company of the redeemed, giving Himself to each individual exactly in that measure in which there is power to receive Him? Every one who enters heaven shall find himself made perfectly happy. Eating of that tree which is in the midst of the paradise of God, he will enjoy in full measure the highest felicity of which he is capable. But there must be warfare, struggle, endurance, beforehand. "To him that overcometh," to no other, is the promise made. Fight, then, as those who strive for the mastery. The prize is worth the conflict. Yet a little while, and the battle shall be ended; and they who have "overcome," by the aid of that Spirit "which speaketh unto the Churches," shall sit down beneath the shadow of "the tree of life," and its fruits shall be "sweet to their taste."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1807.

REFERENCES: ii. 7.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 206; J. Oswald Dykes, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 248. ii. 8-10.—T. Hammond, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 204. ii. 8-11.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 374.

Chap. ii., ver. 10.—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

FAITHFULNESS is the main distinction of the noblest and best of all these angels of Christ's Church. The high moral excellence

of honourably discharging the duties which were assigned to them is obviously made by our Lord the great principle and test of acceptable service. These words of the Master mean—

I. Faithfulness to the human heart. We sometimes make mistakes by not listening to what our hearts tell us about our fellow-men. When under the power of conscience, in the hard grip of logic, and amid the unyielding dicta of our theological dogmas, we are often in danger of forgetting some of the most fundamental facts of human nature which are witnessed to us by our "heart of hearts."

II. Faithfulness to the conscience. The spirit that overcomes the world is the spirit of Christ. It is only when we arm the soul with the same mind that was in Him, only when we take up the cross to follow Him even to Calvary, and there to suffer with Him, that we can gain the victory. He has promised victory to him that overcometh.

III. Faithfulness to our Master and His word under all circumstances. We may be forgotten by our fellows, hidden from all eyes but His; we may have no sympathy from companions, no cheering words from comrades in the fight; we may even hear nothing further on this score from the great Captain of our salvation. But we must be faithful unto death in our spirit, our trust, our obedience, and our love. He looks at death as a foe whom He has worsted; He knows the mettle and the malice of His great antagonist; He has put him to the proof, and the proof was too great. Whereas we tremble at the thought of the encounter, with Him it is the moment of our discharge from doubt, from temptation, from servitude, from waiting, from patience, from tedious toil; to Him it is our acceptance of the reward, the crown, and the glory.

H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 353.

I. These words of the Divine Redeemer imply that a sacred trust has been confided to our keeping.

II. Fidelity in keeping our sacred trust is another point brought out in the text. "Be thou faithful" is the command of our Lord and Saviour to every one who has enlisted in His holy service.

III. The length of the period to which our faithfulness is expected to extend is "unto death"—"faithful" at home and abroad; "faithful" in prosperity and adversity; "faithful" through the whole course of our lives; "faithful unto death.

A reward is promised in the text to all who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity which should stir up the most languid of us to renewed and increasing effort: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 494.

REFERENCES: ii. 10.—E. Paxton Hood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 257. ii. 12-17.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 433. ii. 13.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 155.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

THE New Name.

I. The new name is Christ's and ours. It is His first; it becomes ours by communication from Him. (1) It includes revelation: "I will give him a new name"—a deeper, a more inward, a fresh knowledge and revelation of My own character, as eternal love, eternal wisdom, all-sufficient, absolute power, the home, and treasure, and joy, and righteousness of the whole heart and spirit. (2) On this new revelation of the name of Christ there follows as a consequence assimilation to the name which we possess, or transformation into the likeness of Him whom we behold. The gift of the name is such an inward revelation of Christ in His glory and perfectness as presupposes full sympathy with Him as its condition, and implies a still more thorough conformity to Him as its result. (3) Then there is a third idea implied in the promise, if the new name be Christ's, and that is possession or consecration. His name is given; that is, His character is revealed, His character is imparted, and further by the gift He takes as well as gives: He takes us for His own even in giving Himself to be ours. It is a sign of ownership and authority to impose one's name. We belong to Him in the measure in which we are like Him. He possesses us in the measure in which we possess His name—that is, His revealed self.

II. Look at the other thought which is here, namely, that this new name is unknown, except by its possessor. The text seems to imply that though there shall be no isolation in heaven, which is the perfection of society, there may be incommunicable depths of blessed experience even there. We must possess to understand; we must stand before the throne to

apprehend; and after countless ages we shall have to say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

III. The text gives the condition and the true cause of possessing this new nature. The new name is won and given; it comes as the reward of victory; it comes as a bestowment from Christ: "To him that overcometh will I give." No heaven except to the victor. The victor does not fight his way into heaven, but Christ gives it to Him.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons in Manchester*, vol. iii., p. 75.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"To him that overcometh will I give . . . a new name, . . . which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

I. NOTE the large hopes which gather round this promise of a new name. (1) The new name means new vision; (2) it means new activities; (3) it means new purity; (4) it means new joys.

II. Look at the connection between Christ's new name and ours. Our new name is Christ's new name stamped upon us. On the day of the bridal of the Lamb and the Church the bride takes her Husband's name.

III. Note the blessed secret of this new name. There is only one way to know the highest things of human experience, and that is by possessing them.

IV. Note the giving of the new name to the victors. The renovation of the being and efflorescence into new knowledges, activities, perfections, and joys, is only possible on condition of the earthly life of obedience, and service, and conquest.

A. MACLAREN, *The Unchanging Christ*, p. 223.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 50; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 304. ii. 18-29.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 48. ii. 21.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 233. ii. 23.—S. Minton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 280. ii. 25.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 161. iii. 1-6.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 204; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 303. iii. 2.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life*, p. 281. iii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 08; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 343. iii. 7.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 167.

Chap. iii., vers. 7-11.

LITTLE STRENGTH and his Victory: *Children's Sermon.*

St. John, in writing to the Churches of Asia, is only able to send two letters of unmixed praise: one to Smyrna and the

other to Philadelphia. These letters were addressed to the angel of the Churches—that, no doubt, was to the bishop or the head minister of the Church in each place—so that he might read it to the people.

I. "I have set before thee an open door." This, no doubt, meant to the people of the Church of Philadelphia that God had prepared the way for them to preach the Gospel to others who had not yet heard it. What does it mean to us? Surely it means that God has given us some work to do for Him, that He has opened a door of usefulness for us. There are many people who will gladly do great things, but who will not condescend to think of little ones. It may only be your portion for a little while to do little things for the Master. Do not be above doing little things for Jesus. Remember that nothing is really little if it is done for Him. You would not call a house properly furnished if it only had a few large things in it. You want something more than a bedstead, a dining-table, and a piano. Two or three great acts won't furnish a Christian life, and make it look beautiful. Let us have the large pieces of furniture, but let us have something more. Many say, "I can do nothing, because I have so little strength, and my faith is so very weak." There are too many little-strength and weak-faith Christians, and very many of them have not the least right to be so. Do you want to know how you may become a little-strength and a weak-faith Christian, so that the Lord may get no glory out of your life, and that your face may ever say, "It is not beautiful to be a Christian; the Lord's yoke is not easy: it is very hard; His burden is not light: it is very heavy"? Then I will tell you how to do it; it is so easy. Don't use the little strength God has given you; that is all. The man laid up the talent in a napkin, and of course it gained nothing; but, worst of all, he had that taken from him. So, if you do not use your little strength, even the little you have will all go; it will be taken from you.

II. These people not only used their little strength, but they were also brave. They had not denied Christ's name. Although persecuted for His name's sake, they had not hidden their colours; they had not denied His name. There were those looking on who were of the synagogue of Satan, no doubt some of them their persecutors; but, through the patient endurance of the Christians of Philadelphia, they were won for God. To Smyrna God had promised that the synagogue of Satan should not prevail against them; that means that God

would shield and protect His people from the power of their enemies: but we have a fuller promise here—they shall not only be kept from the power of their enemies, but they shall win some of them over to God's side: "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." They would show by their lives that God was with them, and that He loved them.

J. STEPHENS, *Light for Little Lanterns*, p. 173.

REFERENCES: iii. 7-13.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 282. iii. 8-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1814.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—**"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."**

DIVINE Decrees.*

I. Not long before the fall and treachery of Judas, Christ pronounced a blessing, as it seemed, upon all the twelve Apostles, the traitor included. Who would not have thought from this promise, taken by itself and without reference to the eternal rule of God's government which is always understood, even when not formally enunciated, that Judas was sure of eternal life? It is true our Saviour added, as if with an allusion to him, "Many that are first shall be last"; yet He said nothing to undeceive such as might refuse to consult and apply the fundamental law of His impartial providence. All His twelve Apostles seemed from the letter of His words to be predestined to life. Nevertheless, in a few months Matthias held the throne and crown of one of them. And there is nothing remarkable in the circumstance itself that our Lord should have made up their number to a full twelve after one had fallen; and perhaps there may be contained in it some symbolical allusion to the scope of His decrees which we cannot altogether enter into. He does not look at us as mere individuals, but as a body, as a certain, definite whole, of which the parts may alter in the process of disengaging them from this sinful world, with reference to some glorious and harmonious design upon us who are the immediate objects of His bounty and shall be the fruit of His love if we are faithful.

II. What solemn, overwhelming thoughts must have crowded on St. Matthias when he received the greeting of the eleven Apostles, and took his seat among them as their brother! His very election was a witness against himself if he did not fulfil it. And such surely will be ours in our degree. The Christian of every age is but the successor of the lost and of the dead. We are at present witnesses of the truth, and our very glory is our

* Preached on St. Matthias's Day.

warning. Let us, then, as a Church and as individuals, one and all look to Him who alone can keep us from falling.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 117.

I. WE all have stores of memory. I do not hold these too light a thing to put into my catalogue. It is no trifling possession to have passages of Scripture, of sacred poetry, of holy authors, laid up in the mind. It would be a serious loss if you were to let those memories melt away—as assuredly they will melt away without effort—for memory, and, I think, specially sacred memory, left to itself, is a very treacherous thing. You must bring those passages of the Bible, of poetry, of sacred authors, back frequently to your mind. Increase the power of a sacred memory by always adding something more to the stock; and never forget that it is one of the offices and prerogatives of the Holy Ghost to assist and to empower the memory in Divine things. Remind Him of it. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

II. The acquisition of a new truth or a clearer perception of any truth is a very real and very delightful possession. But, if you would "hold" a truth "fast," you must turn that truth to some practical account, for God is very jealous that His truth be not an idle thing, lying dormant in a man's mind; and if He see any truth lying inactive in your mind, He will suffer it to be robbed. You must realise the truth you have; you must make that truth a centre round which you are always gathering another and another truth.

III. You have enjoyed lately more than you once did the things of God, the means of grace—say, a Christian friendship; say, your private religious duties; say, the ordinances of God's house; say, the Holy Communion. That joy is a precious thing; it is a direct, blessed gift of God. Spiritual joy is not exempt from that general law which binds all joy. In itself it is evanescent. If you would keep your joy, you must study it.

IV. A soft, tender heart, feelings much drawn out in strong love to God or man, is a thing greatly to be prized. But, to maintain that blessed state of mental affection, it is necessary that you live very close to God.

V. An open door of usefulness is an exceeding boon when God gives it to man. Have you any open door of usefulness to benefit any fellow-creature? Occupy it thoroughly.

VI. Spend life in making your calling and election sure. Believe that it needs as much to go on with as ever it did to begin

a religious life; and reverence exceedingly the work of God in you. (1) God keeps us, by His grace, in a state of grace by making us always fear lest we should fall from that grace. (2) The more you have of God's grace, the more you will be assaulted on your way. (3) The only way to "hold fast" is to be "held fast." J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 101.

HEALTHY Conservatism.

I. The crown of our manhood is not made of that in which we are like to other creations, but of that in which we are superior to them. One of the most instructive and interesting of studies is that which involves a comparison of man's ability with that of the lower creation. He is like the stone in that he is subject to gravitation, unlike it in that he has a temporary power to overcome the law of gravitation; he is like the tree and flower in that he cannot thrive physically without sunlight; he is like the bird in that he has power of song; like the horse in that he has strength and swiftness; like the bee and the ant in that he has architectural skill and power of society and government: and so we might go on with our "likes." But in none of these abilities does his manhood consist. The crown of his nature is not in having these instincts, endowments, not even in his being able to cultivate and develop them. The crown of man's nature is his manhood, and his manhood is not his animalhood. Manliness is something else than that which boys in their teens take it to be.

II. The crown of our manhood is in the region we call religious, in no lower region of our nature. The facts of consciousness are as really facts as the facts of the body, as the facts of a material world beneath our feet and material worlds above our heads. "Hold fast" to these. "Hold fast" also to the results of the experiences of the past. Let the Church of God hold fast to its Sabbaths and its sacraments, to its means of grace, to its Bible records. The experiences of the past are too valuable to let go at the bidding of the frivolous and the trifling. "Hold fast" to them. The treasure-house has things new and old in it, but the new never destroys or contradicts the old; it is developed from it as a new springtime from an old winter. A healthy conservatism is as necessary as a healthy progress, and in every nature there ought to be both. R. THOMAS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 198.

REFERENCES: iii. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 164; R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 198; H. P. Liddon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 388; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 15.

Chap. iii., ver. 12.—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, ... and My new name."

THE Pillar in God's Temple.

I. "To him that overcometh," reads the promise; and the first thing that we want to understand is what the struggle is in which the victory is to be won. It is the Saviour Christ who speaks. His voice comes out of the mystery and glory of heaven to the Church in Philadelphia; and this book, in which His words are written, stands last in the New Testament. The Gospel story is all told; the work of incarnation and redemption is all done. Jesus has gone back to His Father, and now is speaking down to men and women on the earth who are engaged there in the special struggle for which He has prepared the conditions, and to which it has been the purpose of His life and death to summon them. Let us remember that. It is a special struggle; it is not the mere human fight with pain and difficulty which every living mortal meets; it is not the wrestling for place, for knowledge, for esteem, for any of the prizes which men covet. Nay; it is not absolutely the struggle after righteousness; it is not the pure desire and determination of a man's own will; it is not to those that Christ looks down and sends His promise. He had called to a special struggle on the earth; He had bidden men struggle after goodness out of love, and gratitude, and loyalty to Him. If the motive everywhere and always is the greatest and most important part of every action, then there must always be a difference between men who are striving to do right, and not to do wrong, according to the love which sets them striving. If it is love of themselves, their struggle will be one thing; if it is love of abstract righteousness, it will be another; if it is love of Christ, it will be still another. It is to men and women in this struggle that Christ speaks, and promises them the appropriate reward which belongs to perseverance and success in that obedience of loyalty and love.

II. This, then, is the peculiar struggle in which Christ, out of heaven, gives His promise. And now the promise can be understood if we understand the struggle. The two belong together. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out." The ideas of the pillar in a building, in a temple, are these two: incorporation and permanence. The pillar is part of the structure,

and when it is once set in its place, it is to be there as long as the temple stands. How clear the picture stands before us. There is a great, bright, solemn temple, where men come to worship; its doors are ever open; its windows tempt the sky. There are many and many things which have to do with such a temple. The winds come wandering through its high arches. Perhaps the birds stray in and build their nests, and stray away again when the short summer is done. The children roam across its threshold, and play for a few moments on its shining floor. Banners and draperies are hung upon its walls a while, and then carried away. Poor men and women, with their burdens and distress, come in and say a moment's prayer, and hurry out. Stately processions pass from door to door, making a brief disturbance in its quiet air. Generation after generation comes and goes, and is forgotten, each giving its place up to another; while still the temple stands, receiving and dismissing them in turn and outliving them all. All there are transitory; all there come into the temple, and then go out again. But a day comes when the great temple needs enlargement. The plan which it embodies must be made more perfect; it is to grow to a completer self. And then they bring up to the door a column of cut stone, hewn in the quarry for this very place, fitted and fit for this place, and no other; and, bringing it in with toil, they set it solidly down as part of the growing structure, part of the expanding plan. It blends with all the other stores; it loses while it keeps its individuality; it is useless except there where it is; and yet there where it is it has a use which is peculiarly its own, and different from every other stone's. The walls are built around it; it shares the building's charges. The reverence that men do to the sacred place falls upon it; the lights of sacred festivals shine on its face. It glows in the morning sunlight, and grows dim and solemn as the dusk gathers through the great expanse. Generations pass before it in their worship. They come and go, and the new generation follows them; and still the pillar stands. The day when it was hewn and set there is forgotten, as children never think when an old patriarch, whom they see standing among them, was born. It is part of the temple where the men so long dead set it so long ago. From the day that they set it there, "it goes no more out."

III. Can we not see perfectly the meaning of the figure? There are men and women everywhere who have something to do with God. They cannot help touching and being touched

by Him, and His vast purposes, and the treatment which He is giving to the world; they cross and recross the pavement of His providence; they come to Him for what they want, and He gives it to them, and they carry it away; they ask Him for bread, and they carry it off into the chambers of their own selfishness and eat it; they ask Him for power, and then go off to the battle-fields or workshops of their own selfishness and use it; they are for ever going in and out of the presence of God; they sweep through His temple like the rushing wind, or they come in like the chance worshipper, and bend a moment's knee before the altar. And then there are the other men who are struggling to escape from sin by the love of Christ. How different they are! The end of everything to them is to get to Christ, and put themselves in Him, and stay there. They do not so much want to get to Christ that they may get away from sin, as they want to get away from sin that they may get to Christ. God is to them not merely a great Helper of their plans: He is the sum of all their plans, the end of all their wishes, the Being to whom their souls say, not, "Lord, help me to do what I will," but "Lord, show me Thy will, that I may make it mine and serve myself in serving Thee." When such a soul as that comes to Christ, it is like the day when the marble column from the quarry was dragged up and set into the temple aisle. Such a soul becomes part of the great purpose of God; it can go no more out; it has no purpose or meaning outside of God; its life is hid there in the sacred aisles of God's life. If God's life grows dark, the dusk gathers around this pillar which is set in it; if God's life brightens, the pillar burns and glows. Men who behold this soul think instantly of God. They cannot picture the pillar outside of the temple; they cannot picture the soul outside of the fear, the love, the communion, the obedience, of God.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 60.

REFERENCES: iii. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. i., p. 312; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 144.

Chap. iii., ver. 14.—"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness."

CONSIDER the word with which the Lord's prayer closes—the word "Amen." It is the *signalem conscientiæ*, the seal of our faith; it is the *votem desiderii*, the fervency of our longing; it is the stamp of our sincerity upon every prayer we use. In the Gospel of St. John, no less than twenty-five times our

Lord Jesus Christ ushers in His deepest asseverations with "Amen, amen," translated in our version, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." What, then, is the meaning of this solemn and sacred word? It means truth; it means reality. Every time we use it, we should remember that God can never be the God who delights in fantasies and shams, but that He is the God of reality and of truth. And I want to bring before you the awfulness of truth—that is, of reality, of sincerity, of guileless simplicity, both as regards our conduct in the life that now is, and as regards the eternal life of man's spirit.

I. First, as regards our earthly life. We may each of us spend our lives either in the world or in God. If we live in God, "if that life which we now live in the flesh is lived by faith in the Son of God," then we are living in the world of reality; if we are living for the world, if we are setting our affections on the things of the earth, we are living in the midst of fatal delusions and fading shadows. God is the Amen, the eternal reality. He has set His canon against pride, and lust, and hate, and lies. Obey Him or disobey Him at your pleasure and at your peril; believe in Him or disbelieve in Him at your pleasure and at your peril; but He is, and His law is, the sole truth of your life. He who makes the Church of God depend on mere outward form, he who bases its high claims on some unprovable theory which may be a fiction, he who confounds religion with the shibboleths of Churches or of parties or the idle, usurpatious encroachments of priests, builds upon the baseless and shifting sands of multitudes of views and practices now thrust almost by force on groaning congregations and on alienated people. The very best that can be said is that the earth hath bubbles as the water hath, and these are of them. The Church depends solely on the presence of Christ. Where Christ is, there the Church is; and where love and holiness are, there Christ is. Wherever we find the fruits of the Spirit, which are love and holiness, there the Spirit is; and where the Spirit is, there the Church is.

II. We must be true men, or we cannot be true Christians. Reason and conscience illumined by prayer—these are the torch-bearers of eternal truth. Seek truth, and you will find it, because God is the God of truth. If you desire heaven, you must, by the aid of Christ's Spirit, win it, for heaven is a temper, and not a place: no priest can give it to you, no ritual can give it to you, no human ordinance can open for you by a millionth of an inch its golden doors; no, you must win it by faithful

obedience to the eternal laws of God. Reality, sincerity, holiness; the elementary Christian graces, faith, hope, love; the primary Christian duties, soberness, temperance, chastity—these are the things and these are the tests of a true religion; apart from these all else is fringes and phylacteries.

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xliii., p. 353.

Chap. iii., ver. 14.—"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

THE New Creation.

The Son of God is called by the title "the beginning of the creation of God," (1) because He was Himself the Creator of the world; (2) because He is the first cause or principle of its restoration.

I. We have here two great spiritual facts. The first is that the Word, who is by eternal generation of one substance with the Father, by the mystery of the Incarnation became of one substance with us. His union with us is a consubstantial union; His substance as man and our substance are one and the same.

II. The other great fact, issuing from the last, is that as by this substantial union and personal distinctness the Son lives by the Father, so we, distinct in person, but partaking of His substance, live by the Son. As the Son partakes of the Godhead of the Father, so we partake of the manhood of the Son; as He lives by the Father, we live by Him. The miraculous Agent in the Incarnation and in the holy sacraments is the same Third Person of the ever-blessed Three, uniting first the Divine nature to ours in the person of the Son, and now our fallen nature to Him as the beginning of the creation of God.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 176.

REFERENCES: iii. 14.—J. B. Lightfoot, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 53; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 679; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 110. iii. 14-21.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1185. iii. 14-22.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 433; J. W. Lance, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 172; G. Macdonald, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvi., p. 72.

Chap. iii., ver. 15.—"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot."

LUKEWARMNESS.

I. The first alarming symptom of lukewarmness is a growing inattention to the private duties of religion. And among these are private prayer, the study of the Bible, and self-examination.

The lukewarm Christian begins by omitting his private devotions on the mornings of his busiest days, or on the nights when he is wearied and worn out in the service of the world. Next, he contrives to shorten his prayers, and leaves his Bible-readings for Sundays. Thus little by little lukewarmness takes possession of the soul, and brings forth its shrivelled and sickly fruit.

II. Another evidence of the encroachments of lukewarmness is carelessness in attending public worship. The single sin of neglecting public worship, if persisted in, will eat out of the soul every germ of its spiritual life.

III. A third symptom of lukewarmness, about which there can be no possible mistake, is an indifference concerning the benevolent enterprises of the day and scant offerings for their furtherance. The disease of lukewarmness is so very prevalent that its presence has ceased to create alarm, and people are sometimes found who have exalted this sin of lukewarmness to the rank of a virtue. They admire and praise the zealous man of business and zealous patriot, but when they speak of the zealous Christian the word suddenly changes its meaning, and it becomes little better than a sarcasm and a sneer. The philosopher's good man is four-square; and cast him where you will, like a die, he always falls sure and steady. It is only such who can make the world better and happier, for they give it the advantage of precept and practice both.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 113.

REFERENCES: iii. 15.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 88; F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 148. iii. 15, 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 424.

Chap. iii., vers. 15, 19.—"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; . . . be zealous therefore, and repent."

I. LOOK at the loving rebuke of the faithful Witness: "Thou art neither cold nor hot." We are manifestly there in the region of emotion. The metaphor applies to feeling. We talk of warmth of feeling, ardour of affection, fervour of love, and the like; and the opposite, cold, expresses obviously the absence of any glow of a true, living emotion. So, then, the persons thus described are Christian people with very little, though a little, warmth of affection and glow of Christian love and consecration. (1) This defectiveness of Christian feeling is accompanied with a large amount of self-complacency. (2) This deficiency of warmth is worse than absolute zero. If you

were cold, at absolute zero, there would be at least a possibility that when you were brought into contact with the warmth you might kindle. But you have been brought into contact with the warmth, and this is the effect.

II. Note some plain causes of this lukewarmness of spiritual life. (1) The cares of this world; the entire absorption of spirit in business. (2) The existence among us or around us of a certain widely diffused doubt as to the truths of Christianity is, illogically enough, a cause for diminished fervour on the part of the men that do not doubt them. That is foolish, and it is strange, but it is true. Beware of unreasonably yielding to the influence of prevailing unbelief. (3) Another cause is the increasing degree in which Christian men are occupied with secular things.

III. Note the loving call to Christian earnestness: "Be zealous therefore." The word "zealous" means literally boiling with heat. We must remember that zeal ought to be a consequence of knowledge, and that, seeing that we are reasonable creatures, intended to be guided by our understandings, it is an upsetting of the whole constitution of a man's nature if his heart works independently of his head; and the only way in which we can safely and wholesomely increase our zeal is by increasing our grasp of the truths which feed it.

IV. Observe the merciful call to a new beginning: "Repent." There must be a lowly consciousness of sin, a clear vision of past shortcomings and abhorrence of these, and joined to these a resolute act of heart and mind beginning a new course, a change of purpose and of the current of our being.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, April 8th, 1886.

Chap. iii., ver. 17.—"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Two Kinds of Sight.

I. It is the striking contrast in these words to which I would draw your attention, the wonderful difference between the real state and the fancied state, and more especially to one word which is the key to the whole: that sin is blind: blind in a world of beauty and light; blind in a region of pitfalls, and delusions, and death. But mark—for this is what makes it so fearful—it is the blindness of the madman, who feels sure that he sees better than the sane. There are two powers of sight, the one real and the other unreal, and if we judge with sinful

eyes, we never see reality. The faculty is wanting, and we do not, cannot, know the want unless we believe humbly. No keenness of the natural, intellectual eye matters at all, as a telescope does not make a man a better judge of colours. We may boast and argue from the piercing powers of sight, which can at the distance of millions of miles discover hidden worlds. A telescope is mere intellectual knowledge, and the eyes of the mere intellectual man are set in this distant focus; and the power of seeing the glory and beauty of the earth on which he lives and things around him is not his, however much he boasts of his sight.

II. Sin is blindness, and this sight is a new power. The truth of God cannot be seen by any unholy eye; and to pass through life trusting to our own judgments is to trust to a telescope to distinguish colours, to a microscope to show us stars, to feet for flying, or any incongruous mixture of wrong powers and functions. Holy Scripture expressly tells us, what all experience confirms, that spiritual things are folly to the natural man, for the simple reason that he does not see them, and so scorns them, just as a clever savage might despise electricity. Sin is blind. The pure see God, and there is no truth which is not of God. No impure spirit ever sees truth.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 5.

REFERENCES: iii. 18.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 404. iii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 164; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 159.

Chap. iii., ver. 20.—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

CHRIST at the Door.

Consider, in the first place, the account which Christ gives of His dealings with men: He stands at the door and knocks; in the second place, the promise which He makes to such as yield to His solicitation: "I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me."

I. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Then the heart is by nature closed against God. On no other supposition could it be needful that Christ should knock for admission. When we turn from considering men as members of society to considering them as creatures of God, then it is we may bring them all under one verdict and pronounce the corruption of our nature total and universal. Here it is that there is no

difference, for the virtuous and the vicious are equally at enmity with God, equally void of love to God, equally indisposed to the service of God. When we try men by their love of God, by their willingness to submit to Him, by their desire to please Him, there is no difference whatsoever; all must be equally brought under the description, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." This truth it is which we derive from the words of our text; it is a truth that the heart of every one is naturally barred against God, so that although it may readily be opened at the touch of friendship or at the call of distress, yet does it obstinately exclude that Creator and Benefactor who alone can fill its mighty capacities. And if the Church thus shows the natural condition of the heart, it shows with equal accuracy by what kind of means Christ strives to gain the entrance which is wickedly denied. Observe, no sort of violence is used. There is nothing like forcing the door. Christ knocks, but when He has knocked, it still rests with man to determine whether he will obey the summons and let in the Guest.

II. Consider briefly the promise of the text. If men would deal candidly with others and with themselves, many would have to confess that they see little of what is pleasant in the account which Scripture gives of the joys and enjoyments of redeemed men in glory. They have no taste for adoring God and admiring Him in His perfections; and they cannot, therefore, be alive to the happiness of a state in which praising God will form the chief business, and knowing God the great delight. But if you have no relish for such happiness as heaven is to afford, this of itself should make you earnest in obeying Christ's summons and throwing open the door, for I do not know a more startling truth, if we be yet indifferent and impenitent, than that heaven would be no heaven to us, even if we could get within its precincts. But to those who can feel the worth of the promise in the text we need not say that there is a communion of intercourse between Christ and the soul which, if not capable of being described to a stranger, is inestimably precious to those by whom it is experienced. It is no dream of the enthusiast, it is the statement of soberness and truth, that Jesus so manifests Himself to those who believe on His name, and communicates such a sense of His presence, that He may be said to come in to them, to sup with them, and they with Him.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3249.

THE Waiting Saviour.

The Lord Jesus is continually asking for admission into the hearts of all of us. He asks in various ways and at various times.

I. He comes to us sometimes and showers blessings on our heads. He heaps mercy upon mercy and privilege upon privilege; He gives us all that makes life joyous and bright; He gives us the tender love of family and friends; He gives us a bright, happy, peaceful home; He gives us prosperity in our worldly affairs; sometimes He knocks by sending us mercies and deliverances, and seeks thus to awaken our gratitude, and seeks thus to draw forth our love.

II. Or, again, sometimes He knocks by sending us afflictions. He lays His hand upon us; He sends sickness into our family; He sends us trouble and anxiety in our worldly affairs; He sends us disappointment and sorrow; He takes from us those who are nearest and dearest to us on earth; and then, when we are crushed and broken in heart, then, when we are full of sorrowful and desponding thoughts—then it is that Christ knocks.

III. Again, the Lord knocks by means of warnings. We have most of us had certain solemn warnings in the course of our lives. Once more, He knocks at sacred seasons and at sacred services. We never come to church, we never listen to a sermon, we never read a chapter of God's word, but then Christ knocks at our hearts, then He calls to us, then He speaks to us. He bids us give up this and that sin; He bids us clear away those weeds, those rank, foul, hateful weeds, and open the door of our hearts, and give entrance to the Lord who died for us on Calvary.

IV. Lastly, consider why Christ knocks; consider what it is that He offers to do for us; consider why He desires to abide in our hearts. It is because He desires to make those hearts like Himself; it is because He desires to make them pure, and loving, and faithful, and true; it is because He desires to make them so completely one with Him that in all our thoughts, and words, and works we may reflect His glory, His purity, His love.

E. V. HALL, *The Waiting Saviour*, p. 13.

WELCOMING Christ.

I. Note Christ's love at the present time: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." (1) Our first impression of this adorable

figure is of wonder that He should be there at all. He, the Son of God, who has suffered such unspeakable wrongs for us, comes again in a form most Divinely fair, and offers Himself as our Guest. He who contains within Himself infinite treasures of love, who comprehends all creatures within His arms, comes down to us and stands at our door, as if we alone out of His whole Church required Him with us. (2) Look on this image of patience. There He stands in the cool evening hour, having waited till the heat and business of the day be past. He chooses the time when the mind is most likely to be at leisure, and to be quick to hear. The cares of the day are over; it is the hour of relaxation. The very solitude of the chamber disposes the mind to serious thought. Silence has its quiet influence. The spirit of the evening scene is peace. His footprints are on the threshold, marking His last visit, and no one has heeded them. No welcome, it is feared, for Him again to-night, waiting patiently till all within be hushed and His voice be heard.

II. "If any man hear My voice, and open the door." This is the condition of His entering, the welcome which He asks of us. Two possible states of life are indicated: a man may be so deaf that he cannot hear, or he may hear and not heed.

III. "I will come in to him," etc. In the whole Bible there is not a touch of Divine love more tender and penetrating than this. (1) The intimacy of Christ's love is here so great that the believer may shrink from it in fear. But this is not God's intention. Wherever Jesus enters He takes men as they are. All He asks is a welcome; that is, their faith. (2) When He sits at meat with you see the perfect interchange and equal communion of your spirit with His: "I will sup with him, and he with Me." Whatever He gives He gives Himself; He is all in all to the faithful soul, and the soul is all in all to Him.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 164.

REFERENCES: iii. 20.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 137; T. J. Crawford, *The Preaching of the Cross*, p. 57; *Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 91; J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 307; R. Glover, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 342; G. Macdonald, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxiv., p. 215; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 357.

Chap. iii., ver. 21.—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

THE Close of the Year.

I. "He that overcometh." Then there is light shining in and struggling with the darkness—a conflict year-long and life-

long, which, though it has its defeats, may have its victories also, which, though its outward aspect is gloomy, may issue in glory, and honour, and immortality. Years bring us another lesson than the lesson of discouragement. Though much is taken away, much is also gained—gained by that very loss. The past has become for us full of rich and precious store: lessons of self distrust; lessons of charitable thought; lessons of reliance on God. If we have lost bloom, we have gathered ripeness. The future has opened and widened before us. It is no longer the book of dark things, closed and put by till our play is over: the page lies open before us on the desk of life's business; though much in it is hidden, much is revealed to our inner sight, which solemnises us, and stirs us to action. It is no longer the great unknown land talked of as a dream and a mystery, but we are plying our voyage thither, standing at watch, and holding the helm. Already we begin to see its tokens float past us, and to scent the gales which come from its fields. And the present—we have learned to distrust it and to question its testimony, have become wiser than to encumber by loading ourselves with its fading flowers; we search for pearls that shall endure.

II. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Here, again, as years pass on we want more of Him, a firmer reliance on His work and His word, to stand among things visible and endure as seeing the invisible. If we would be gaining this victory, we must labour hard for knowledge and obedience, and every way for a greater realising of Christ. Our text is not only an implication of the possibility of victory: it is also a promise to the victor. The Author and Finisher of our faith Himself proclaims it, Himself offers to the conquerors a prize, and pledges for it His own word: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v., p. 319.

Chap. iii., ver. 21 (R.V.).—"He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne."

THE Christian Conqueror.

This is the last of seven honours set before the Christian conquerors in the epistles to the seven Churches; and the throne of which this blessing speaks is itself described in St. John's next vision. We know what a throne it was which he saw unveil itself before him. We see at once that

this throne means the centre of creation; that the glory of it is as of One invisible, and, except by His own will, unknowable; and that in that heart and centre of all things lives One who has suffered, One who has died, One who is and who ever has remained sinless: the Lamb that had been slain and dieth no more is in the midst of the throne. Perfect sympathy with pain, perfect deliverance from evil, are there in absolute life and light; and the Lamb, the Victor-Victim, speaks, and says, "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His throne."

I. He that overcometh. When St. John wrote, people, like that faithful martyr Antipas, were overcoming by their own blood, and the whole Apocalypse shows a world about to be red with martyrdoms. Yet even then the word "overcoming" is used in these seven brief letters in connection with trials and difficulties which were not necessarily to end with them. That was only the supreme method of solving such problems of life as were otherwise insoluble. There were final conflicts in those days in which the forces of God and of the world were grappled together in the lives of men; the spirits of light and darkness incarnated themselves in men's daily action in forms so violent that he who meant to give God the victory in his own life could often do it only by giving his own life over to the death. But if the extremity of the struggle is not now commonly suffered to work itself out to the same bitter end—with the knowledge of the onlooking world, it never could be suffered now—yet similar, and sometimes the same, problems have to be solved in men's lives still, and still the Christian is called to overcome, and still he can often be victor only by being first a victim, as the Lamb was; and if he overcomes, his place is still henceforth the centre of all things. He sits with Him on the throne in true sympathy with the pain of this world, and also having himself a share in this world's deliverance from pain and from all evil.

II. What, then, are these problems which once could only be solved by readiness to die for the right solution, and which still present themselves for solutions—for solutions on the rightness or wrongness of which almost all, if not all, about us depends? Such problems when St. John wrote were all the awful wickedness of the age; the conventional false worships which were then the cementing of the State and of all society; slavery; gladiator shows; one vast licentiousness of life. Men and women died freely in combating such things, for there was that within them

which was a perpetual war with the spirit of these things. Among the problems outside us are such expenses of civilisation still: licentiousness of life; the classes that are sacrificed to it; the tender age of corruption; again, the miserable, unclean, indecent abodes which are all that civilised towns and villages offer, and grudge, to their myriads or their hundreds; again, our submissiveness to wealth, and our submissiveness to numbers, and our extreme difficulty in the way of simplicity of life or of speech, and now, even now, the ancient difficulty seeming to begin again of how to live, and talk, and think Christianly among unbelievers. One who does his own honest part in healing the world's sorrow and lightening the world's burdens, and is not ashamed to say he does it for Christ—he is the overcoming one who helps to solve the world's greatest problems. That is the part which must be greater in the world to come than it can be now; for we shall not find ourselves able to do these things except in the spirit of Christ.

ARCHBISHOP TAIT, *Family Churchman*, May 23rd, 1883.

Chap. iv., ver. 1.—"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven."

HEAVEN Near, though Hidden.

Note—

I. The division between earth and heaven. The fact that earth and heaven are divided by so wide a gulf seems to me one of the strangest facts in our experience, though long habit prevents the strangeness from striking us so much. We should have expected the very opposite. Allowing that men are unfit to enter heaven, yet it would have seemed most natural that we should have had the full evidence about it which direct communication could have given. Comparatively few cross the Atlantic to America, yet, though we may never see it, we require no act of faith to realise its existence and condition; but the world of heaven, the home of God, is so far removed beyond the range of our knowledge that we have need of faith to be convinced even that it exists, of faith which, though based on reason, sometimes fails. If only we could identify heaven with some distant star, that would be a handle for our confidence as we caught its glimmer in the night; but even such a satisfaction is withheld. Where heaven is, where God is, even that God is, we cannot demonstrate by our reason. God has so cut us off in space, in

our little island world, from the rest of His dominions that we cannot cross the ocean or read or hear of others reaching His eternal shore.

II. The connection between earth and heaven. One point of connection between the two which at least helps to make heaven seem nearer to us is that life in heaven, just as much as our life here, is proceeding now. We think of heaven too much as a future state; we should remember that to countless multitudes it is a present state. Heaven is not a dim and distant promised vision merely which God may not call into existence for unknown ages yet; heaven is an actual, living world, whose inhabitants are conscious at this moment of life and joy. Its worship is ascending now to God. His servants there are busy with their noble work; their bliss is a present feeling arising from the presence of God now.

III. The door is set open between earth and heaven. The division is maintained between the two in order that our discipline may not cease. But sometimes the door is opened that our faith may not fail. That has happened "in those sundry times and divers manners when God spake unto the fathers by the prophets." The revelations they received of God and of man's destiny were glimpses through a door opened in heaven, and were exceptions to the seclusion which God maintains; to them He broke the silence. A door was set open in heaven also when the Son of God passed through. And whenever a Christian pilgrim reaches his journey's end, then, too, it may be said that the door between earth and heaven is set open to let the wanderer pass into his home.

T. M. HERBERT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 395.

REFERENCES: iv. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 887; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 1; *Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 367; A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 70; Talmage, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 202.

Chap. iv., vers. 2, 3, 5.

THE Revelation of the Triune God and its Diffusion.

I. The form which both Prophet and Apostle saw seated on the heavenly throne was of a clear, brilliant flame colour, partly red like the sardine, or, to use a modern term, the carnelian, and partly of the lighter hue of yellow amber. The truth symbolised in this appearance is thus set forth in plain terms by the Apostle to the Hebrews: "Our God is a consuming fire." The first attribute under which God presents Him-

self to a soul which He proposes to renew and sanctify is that of transcendently clear and brilliant holiness; He will be known in the first instance as a God with whom moral evil cannot dwell, who cannot endure, in those who approach to Him, a single stain of impurity. We cannot but grant that, awful as the spotless perfection of the Divine character is to a sinner's gaze, it is yet exceeding brilliant and glorious. The jasper and the sardine stone, although the infirm eye of man cannot bear to gaze upon them when they flash and kindle up in the sunlight, are yet of a hue exceedingly beautiful and brilliant.

II. It is the Mediator between God and man, even the Lord Jesus Christ, "which is our hope," who is here symbolised to us under the lovely and appropriate emblem of an emerald rainbow. What sweet refreshment to the aching eyeballs to rest for a while upon an emerald green, the very colour which, when the power of sight is enfeebled, is calculated to preserve it! In the existence of light, the existence of the rainbow is involved; for what is the rainbow but light reflected from the raindrops? And what is the Lord Jesus, considered as a Divine Person incarnate, but God reflected in the infirm medium of a manhood pure as crystal?

III. "Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne." Fire, we know, is a constant emblem of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that Person in the Triune Jehovah whose office it is to sanctify the mind of man, not of one man, but of many, to abide in the Church, yet not in one local Church, but in all the branches of the Church universal. Contemplated in His office character as distinct from His essence, He is multiform; and to His multiformity the text certifies.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 267.

Chap. iv., ver. 3.—"And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

THE Throne and the Rainbow.

Look—

I. At this wonderful throne. Of course we understand such a thing to be the symbol of government, of the Divine government in the universe, for that Being on the seat of royalty is God. But what do the other emblems mean? The whole chapter seems to glitter with a blaze of precious jewels, some of them with strange names. (1) The exalted monarch is said to be like a jasper and a sardine stone. I find the soberest commentators

agreed in declaring that what is here called jasper must be the diamond, and the sardine is only what we call a carnelian, that is, a flesh-coloured gem in hue, as the name signifies. And hence these expositors would have us believe that this personage, with a Divine brightness and a human expression, is none other than the Lamb in the midst of the throne. (2) The attendants. The very nobles are crowned, and wear royal raiment; their ordinary seats are thrones. (3) This vision teaches that earth can always and everywhere be seen from heaven. (4) Observe once more, this is an unimpeachable government. These living creatures are worshipping while watching.

II. The rainbow. This represents a covenant, as the other represented a rule. (1) The ancient covenant has in it the promise of the covenant of grace. (2) Its appearance just here in John's vision is welcomed more for its graciousness than for its antiquity. (3) Observe how well this vision teaches us that God's covenant is completed. This rainbow is a circlet; it goes around the throne. (4) The covenant is abiding; it will stand for ever. (5) This covenant is to each of us individual and personal.

III. Note the collocation of the two symbols. (1) God's promise surrounds God's majesty; (2) God's grace surrounds God's justice; (3) God's love surrounds God's power; (4) God's glory surrounds God's children.

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 297.

Chap. iv., ver. 3.—"And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

I. THE rainbow. We are all familiar with it as a natural phenomenon. (1) In the Bible history it proclaimed the fact of the Divine reconciliation; (2) it intimated that providence is administered under the reign of grace; (3) the grand purpose of the rainbow was to seal or ratify the covenant of God.

II. The position of the rainbow. The rainbow is round about the throne, not above, as dominating, or upon, as occupying, but round about, as encompassing the throne; and in this regard its position is as significantly instructive as it is itself. (1) It evidently carries us up to the Divine origin of the covenant; (2) it intimates that the Divine majesty rules in the covenant throughout; (3) it assures us that the covenant will never pass from the Divine remembrance.

III. The aspect of the rainbow, the natural rainbow round

about the throne, here said to be in sight like unto an emerald. Observe why this rainbow has so much in it, not of heaven's, but of earth's, colour, not sky-blue, but emerald green. (1) It indicates that there is a refreshing beauty in the covenant which is never wearisome to look at; (2) it may be held to indicate that there is an essential unity in the covenant, whatever variety may circumstantially distinguish it; (3) the everlasting duration of the covenant may be said to be shadowed forth in the emerald aspect of the rainbow round about the throne. For the green of the emerald is as an unfading hue.

E. THOMSON, *Memorials of a Ministry*, p. 208.

REFERENCES: iv. 4, 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 441; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 255.

Chap. iv., ver. 8.—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

There is something exceedingly solemn in the opening of a new year. At such times more than others, when even the trifler is visited for an instant by serious thought, does the Christian love to trace the hand of God in the Church and in the world, to abstract himself from the whirl of business, and politics, and controversy, and calmly answer the important question, "Where am I, and whither tending?"

I. The words of the text form part of the ascription of praise uttered in heaven by the four living creatures, who symbolise, as I believe, the creation of God. They express a sense of the holiness and eternity of the Almighty, that He is essentially pure, and just, and merciful, and that His being and operations extend through past and present and to come. Now just such a sense of the holiness and providence of God befits us at the opening of another year of our lives. To have a firm persuasion that He is a pure, and just, and merciful Being, to trace His operations as such in this His world, is the most precious result of human knowledge and the highest triumph of the intellect of man. And as this view of the world is the highest result of wisdom, so is it likewise a cause of abundant consolation to the believer in Christ. It furnishes to him the comforting assurance that all things are working together for good, that the Lord reigneth, be the earth never so unquiet; and every onward step in the advancement of man, while it elates others with unbecoming pride, fills him with humble joy.

II. At present much of what God has done is unintelligible

to us; more of what He is doing, seeing that we ourselves are a part of it, is hidden from us; and what He will do and bring on the world, who shall presume to say? But let us remember that to His people, those who in their hearts and lives serve and love Him, a day will come when, gifted with nobler faculties, breathing a purer air, and gazing with a keener vision, they will trace all His dealings with men in their completeness, and confess that He hath done all things well. Then the blurred and blotted map of the world's history will be restored, the vacant regions of human memory filled up, every corner of darkness and mystery lit with the beams of the Sun of light and righteousness.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1.

Chap. iv., ver. 8 (with 1 John v., ver. 20).

PREACHED on Trinity Sunday.

To-day we are called upon to keep the festival of revelation. Every other great festival of our Church commemorates a fact through which God has been pleased to teach men something of His purpose of love; Trinity Sunday encourages us to reflect for a brief space on that final truth, most absolute, most elementary, most practical, which gives unity and stability to all knowledge. The view of the Divine nature which it offers for our devout contemplation is the charter of human faith.

I. The conception of the Triune God is not given to us first in an abstract form. The abstract statement is an interpretation of facts, a human interpretation of vital facts, an interpretation wrought out gradually in the first years of the Church, and still mastered gradually in our individual growth. We are required each, in some sense, to win for ourselves the inheritance which is given to us, if the inheritance is to be a blessing. We learn through the experience of history and life how God acts, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and by the very necessity of thought we are constrained to gather up these lessons into the simplest possible formula. So we come to recognise a Divine Trinity, which is not sterile, monotonous simplicity. We come to recognise One in whom is the fulness of all conceivable existence in the richest energy, One absolutely self-sufficient and perfect, One in whom love finds absolute consummation, One who is in Himself a living God, the fountain and the end of all life.

II. The conception of the Triune God illuminates the idea of creation. It enables us to gain firm hold of the truth that the

learning which we observe under the condition of time answers to a Being beyond time; that history is the writing out at length of that which we may speak of as a Divine thought. The same conception illuminates the idea of the Incarnation. It enables us to see that the Incarnation in its essence is the crown of the Creation, and that man, being made capable of fellowship with God, has in his very constitution a promise of the fulfilment of his highest destiny.

III. This truth is not speculative, but practical. The Christian conception of God is the translation into the language of thought of the first Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. By our faith in these facts we confess that the Divine life has been united with human life. We confess, even if we do not distinctly realise the force of the confession, that the Divine life is the foundation and the end of human life. And we live, so far as life deserves the name, by this faith by which consciously or unconsciously we are stirred to toil and sustained in sacrifice.

BISHOP WESTCOTT, *Oxford Review and Journal*, May 24th, 1883.

REFERENCES: iv. 8.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiii., p. 357. iv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1002; *Homilist*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 425. iv. 10, 11.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 145; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 286. iv. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 12. v. 1-10.—*Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 417. v. 4, 5.—A. James, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 21. v. 5, 6.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 414.

Chap. v., ver. 6.—"In the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain."

THE Lamb Slain in the Midst of the Throne.

I. The sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ is recognised in heaven. Think as men may of the theme of redemption through atoning blood, it is acknowledged in its reality and perceived in its glory by the dwellers in a higher and purer sphere than our own. There is, I imagine, a design in this representation to exhibit to us that glory of the Redeemer which is peculiar to Him only as a Lamb that had been slain. He has a glory independent of any of His achievements for man, a glory to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be withdrawn, whose shining can neither be brightened nor dimmed by the obedience or disobedience of His creatures, the glory of His essential Deity. But the peculiar glory of the Redeemer resulted from His work as

Mediator. To accomplish this work, He assumed humanity. He obtained His victory by falling; and if the military chieftain, returning a conqueror from the conflict, manifests his energy, and prowess, and bravery by the wounds which he bears away with him from the battle-field, why can we not understand how the appearance of Jesus Christ on high, as a Lamb that had been slain, is the brightest illustration of His grandeur?

II. These considerations minister to our own personal comfort, security, and hope. Christ is now carrying on in heaven the very office and work which He commenced when on earth; and though there is no visible altar and no literal sacrifice, no endurance of anguish, and no shedding of blood, yet still He presents vividly and energetically the marks of His Passion, and the effect is the same as though He died daily and acted over again and again the scene of His tremendous conflict with the powers of darkness.

III. Look at the relations which Christ sustains as possessed of infinite wisdom and unlimited power to govern the world, symbolised by the seven eyes and the seven horns, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. No doctrine is more plainly taught in the Bible than that Christ by His sufferings has been exalted to a throne of universal dominion, "given to be Head over all things to the Church," so that Providence has brought all its resources and all its instrumentalities and laid them down at the foot of the cross, to be used in subserviency to and in furtherance of its grand design. The Redeemer has a kingdom, and an end for which the kingdom exists, peculiarly His own, and He must reign until His rule is universally acknowledged, and all His enemies are put under His feet.

E. Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 36.

I. Notice the description that is given of Christ: a Lamb. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." That was Jesus of Nazareth. You cannot read the Old Testament without understanding the same thing clearly: "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter." That also is Jesus of Nazareth. There is a fitness in His being presented as a Lamb in His own personal character. Morning sacrifices, passover lambs—these and kindred institutions of the Old Testament all point in the same direction.

II. This Lamb slain even yonder in heaven to the vision of the Apostle bears traces of having been slain. God deals

with angels one by one. The angels are not a race. Like the trees of the forest, each one stands upon his own root. I feel thankful that we belong to a race. Christ took not on Him the nature of angels. We are a race, and are dealt with as a community. We stood in the first Adam, and he sinned; Christ is the second Adam, and we can stand in Him, and be saved; and there is the philosophy of the Lamb slain. He came that He might undo what the first representative did: He came that He might stand for His people, that He might be in their room. He is slain, for the wages of sin is death; He is slain, for the law was broken, and He magnifies it; He is slain, because there was a penalty, and before angels, and principalities, and powers God is to be seen as forgiving for a cause, and that cause is the atoning death of the Lamb of God: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life." That is a familiar text. Look into the meaning of it, and below the surface. The world is like a great house, with vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour; He loves it as His great house, but let it be our care that we be not the vessels to dishonour.

III. The Lamb slain is on the throne. In one breath the preacher tells us about Christ as a Victim, Christ as a Priest; in the next breath he tells us about this same Crucified One as on the throne. Yes, it is a strange combination. Man never could have made it; human intellect never could have originated it.

IV. The Lamb slain is standing in the midst of the throne. Fourteen or fifteen times in the Scriptures Christ is connected in this way with the throne; but this picture, standing, is peculiar. It is here and in one other place, here very fitly: standing is the attitude of activity. The man on duty, the man who has to do things, the man who has to put his strength into things, stands up. Christ is Mediator, He is High-priest still: He ever liveth to make intercession; He is Prophet still: He is teaching all His people; He is King: He is standing, and nothing escapes His vision.

J. HALL, *British Weekly Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 117.

CHRIST and His Members United by the Holy Spirit.

The union of Christ with His people, and of them with Him, is a thing which may be described, in the light of the New Testament, as not only a great truth of spiritual life, but the

truth of truths. It is related to all other kindred doctrines as that which combines, harmonises, and explains them; it appears as the end where they appear as means.

I. The sacred mediation of the heavenly Spirit, the conveyance through Him of every blessing of the vital union, appears everywhere in the subject. The Sevenfold One is sent forth into all the earth, as the eyes, as the presence, of the exalted Lamb of the sacrifice. It is by Him, and by Him alone, that that presence is in the Church and is in the Christian.

II. "Sent forth into all the earth" from the presence of the Blessed, from the heaven of heavens into all the earth, from the heart of God to the heart of man, from amidst the song of the heavenly elders to you and to me—to the circumstances of our life to-day; to the stones and dust, the thorns and mire, of our path; to the snares and the illusions, to the crowds and to the solitude, of earth. Yes, He is sent forth into the present, the visible, the temporal; He is intended, He intends Himself, to be no dreamy abstraction above our heads and hearts, but to be the inmost Friend, the living strength, the infinitely ready and versatile resource and expedient of the hour of your temptation and of mine. He is able to set us at liberty in Christ, and yet by the same act to bind us into the bondage of Him "whom to serve is to reign"; He is able to make all the flying hours of inestimable and never-returning time sacred to us, and yet to take out of them all anxiety, to fill the heart with the things eternal, and yet to open to it as no other touch can do all that is truly rich and beautiful in the things of this life; He is able, in a word, having united us to Christ, to make that union a living, bright reality, a possession that we use as well as have, in the whole of life.

H. C. G. Moule, *Christ is All*, p. 125.

References: v. 6.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 284. v. 6, 7.—E. W. Shalders, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 362. v. 7.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 295. v. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1051.

Chap. v., vers. 8-12.

The End of the Redeemed.

I. Such a vision as that of the text is intended, we cannot doubt, to form a ground of hope and of encouragement in the progressive advancement of our spiritual life. Our nature is possessed of an instinct ever looking forward to the end of our course, with power to brighten the scenes with imaginative

pictures. It is the life of hope, and every faculty is stimulated and sustained by its influences. The Revelation is the one book of Scripture that specially feeds the yearnings of souls who live on the promised inheritance of the redeemed. When a man is returning home after long wanderings, he anticipates the scene, the old haunts, the faces, the voices, of early days; and his heart springs up and burns within him. The revelations of St. John were intended to tell us of this far home of faith and to quicken a similar spring of exulting anticipation, to cause the same glow of hope to spring within every one who is disciplining himself patiently in the midst of these earthly trials, waiting for the fulness of the manifestation of Christ.

II. These visions, moreover, involve the existence in disembodied souls of active, living energies. There are those who tell us that souls separate from the body pass into an unconscious sleep; that the dead are consequently losers in comparison with those who remain on earth. But the saints are represented in the visions of St. John as no less actively engaged than the angels who appear in the same visions. This may in part explain the calling away of many whom we think we can ill spare, leaving us in their full strength and spiritual maturity. They have other service in higher worlds; they are needed where alone more blessed tasks of love can be accomplished.

III. These visions raise us to a higher view of human life. The outward scene around us deceives us; the thought of the faithful who are gone before us is calculated to counteract our fearful downward tendency. They trusted all to God, and they have found Him true. We may have many ends; they had one: we may have divided hearts; they had given all their heart. This unity and consistency distinguished their course; and as they lived, so they died, in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. The standard of our earthly life rises as we look on their present existence with God.

T. T. CARTER, *Sermons*, p. 31.

REFERENCE: v. 9.—Talmage, *Old Wells Dug Out*, p. 277.

Chap. v., vers. 9, 10.

WHEREIN consists the value of man as man? The text calls our attention to two salient points which are to be found in that valuation, two capacities that belong to us all.

I. Man can think; man can pray; man can live; man can

will. That power of thought, that power of will, above all that capacity for affection, leads you to a truth of your nature which is witnessed in the Passion of the Lord. The Passion of Jesus was never more majestic, although it may have been more moving, than at the moment when He stood before the insolent impudence of Herod or the miserable cowardice of Pilate, speechless in the one case, speaking in the other; and as He spoke in the majesty of His sorrow He witnessed to the capacity of sovereignty in man. Man was born a king: "He hath made us kings unto God."

II. But the Passion witnessed to one point more. The Passion, as the world would phrase it, was a failure; it was the witness of the tremendous failure apparently of a matchless mission. Why? Because it was the consummation of that most fruitful and eloquent act of which man is capable: the act of sacrifice. It is a common-place to repeat that by sacrifice you are born, by sacrifice you are educated, by sacrifice you succeed; but remember that to limit your success to the horizon of time is to cramp that capacity. The Passion appeared to be a failure because the reach of its achievement went further than the horizon of time. Man, in full view of the Passion, is reading the lesson of his great humanity; he is expounding the principle of self-sacrifice; he is acting as a priest to God. Act as a king, conquering self, ruling your passions; act as a priest, sacrifice self rather than give way to what is wrong; and you will ever see before you the witnessing picture of your Divine Redeemer, strengthening you by example and grace.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 257.

REFERENCES: v. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1225; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 254; vol. v., p. 469. vi. 2.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 409; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 152. vi. 3.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 297.

Chap. vi., vers. 9-11.

THE Waiting of the Invisible Church.

We may gather with all certainty from this wonderful revelation of the inner mysteries of the heavenly court—(1) that God has a fixed time for the end of the world; (2) that God has fixed that time according to the measures of the work which He has to finish. Even as Christ had a work to finish on earth, so that we read again and again that His "hour was not yet come," in like manner now in heaven He has

a definite foreseen scheme for the administration of His mediatorial kingdom; and according to the accomplishing of this work will be the time of His coming. So much in a general way, but in this passage we have something more definite and detailed.

I. He has shadowed out to us the nature of the work that He has to do before the end comes; that is, to make up a certain number whom God has foreseen and predestined to life eternal. This then in general is the nature and direction of the mystery of this seemingly entangled world Out of the midst of it He is drawing the children of the regeneration, knitting them in one fellowship, in part still visible, in part out of sight. When the Son of God passed into the heavens He began to draw after Him a glorious train of saints, like as the departing sun seems to draw after him the lights which reflect his own splendour, till the night starts out full of silver stars.

II. Again, in this gathering out of the mystical body of His Son, God is carrying on the probation of mankind. In the inscrutable secrets of His providential government, He is so ordering the strife of the seed of the woman with the seed of the serpent, of the Church with the world, as to fulfil the manifold purposes of love and of long-suffering. And (1) we see that this long-permitted strife is ordained for the perfecting of His saints. (2) This mysterious work has an aspect of long-suffering towards sinners. It is thus that God gives them a full season for repentance. (3) We see from all this what ought to be the master aim of our lives; that is, to make sure of our fellowship in that mystical number.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 333.

Chap. vi., ver. 11.—"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

THE Intermediate State.

I. In this passage we are told that the saints are at rest. "White robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season." The great and anxious question that meets us is, What is to become of us after this life? We fear for ourselves, we are solicitous about our friends, just on this point. Now here Scripture meets our need. It is enough, surely, to be in

Abraham's bosom, in our Saviour's presence; it is enough, after the pain and turmoil of this world, to be at rest.

II. Next, in this description it is implied that departed saints, though at rest, have not yet received their actual reward. "Their works do follow them," not yet given in to their Saviour and Judge. They are in an incomplete state in every way, and will be so till the day of judgment, which will introduce them to the joy of their Lord. (1) They are incomplete inasmuch as their bodies are in the dust of the earth, and they wait for the resurrection. (2) They are incomplete as being neither awake nor asleep; they are in a state of rest, not in the full employment of their powers. (3) There is an incompleteness also as regards their place of rest. They are "under the altar," not in the full presence of God, seeing His face and rejoicing in His works, but in a safe and holy treasure-house close by, like Moses "in a cleft of the rock," covered by the hand of God and beholding the skirts of His glory. (4) The intermediate state is incomplete as regards the happiness of the saints. The blessed in their disembodied state admit of an increase of happiness, and receive it. "They cried out in complaint, and white robes were given them; they were soothed and bid wait a while."

III. Nor would it be surprising if, in God's gracious providence, the very purpose of their remaining thus for a season at a distance from heaven were that they may have time for growing in all holy things and perfecting the inward development of the good seed sown in their hearts. As we are expressly told that in one sense the spirits of the just are perfected on their death, it follows that the greater the advance each has made here, the higher will be the line of his subsequent growth between death and the resurrection.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 367.

Chap. vi., ver. 16.—"The wrath of the Lamb."

THE Consequences of Sin.

I. The wages of sin are paid with a fearful compound interest, and the real terror of evil is that it does not die with its immediate author. It lives with a strange, vicarious life, ramifying, developing, multiplying, hideously replenishing the earth, till the lust of one ancestor, and the intemperance of another, and the pride, and the jealousy, and the selfishness of

others, have intertwined and interwoven and invested their posterity with a thousand incapacities, and hindrances, and weaknesses, and tendencies to evil; and the world has become one great discord of pain, and sorrow, and misunderstanding, and intellectual failure, and moral palsy, and spiritual death.

II. Throughout the ages man has been incessantly impelled to ask, What is there in moral evil more than meets the eye? What will sin turn out to be when we see it in the light of the real world? And if we confine ourselves to observation of history, quite apart from revelation, Shakespeare's words are literally true,

> "The weariest and most loathèd worldly life
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature is a paradise
> To what we fear of death."

III. The judgment of man upon himself has been that the consequences of sin cannot but last beyond the grave. If we will from time to time think upon these facts—the fact of the present consequences of moral evil and the fact of the gloomy forebodings with which the sight of these consequences time out of mind has filled the heart of man—we shall be in less danger of the popular modern fallacy which insults alike both the human dignity and the Divine by promising to sin apart from repentance an amiable obliteration, forgetting that hell, after all, may be the last prerogative of the human will.

J. R. Illingworth, *Sermons*, p. 48.

I. Consider the ideas presented to us and apprehended by faith when Jesus Christ is revealed under the name of the Lamb. (1) One of these, doubtless, is the idea of meekness. It was not as a stern and just Judge that He came to save the world, or as a Monarch in the pride of state, or a Conqueror flushed with victory. He was humble and gentle, of poor parents, and from a despised town, born in a stable and cradled in a manger. He sits on the throne of heaven and earth, but still it is the throne of the Lamb. (2) Another idea comprised in this appellation is that of perfect purity and innocence. Not only was every animal used in the typical services of the Temple to be free from imperfection, but Christ was expressly compared to a lamb without blemish and without spot, and most exactly was the type fulfilled. (3) The leading idea of the title "the

Lamb" is the atonement Christ made for sin by the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross.

II. Consider the awful words of our text: "The wrath of the Lamb." The meek and holy Being, who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, has His wrath; and His wrath is the more terrible because He is meek and lowly and the propitiation for all sins. Mercy neglected is guilt incurred, and in proportion to the love displayed in man's salvation is the ingratitude of evil, and must be the condemnation of those who reject Him. (1) "Behold the Lamb of God." And who is He? He is a Man, but no mere man, for no man ever spake or lived as this Man. An angel? "He took not on Him the nature of angels." God was manifest in the flesh, and God and man, one Christ, bore our sins and atoned for them on the cross; and can we think that such love, beneath the conception of which the mind staggers, half incredulous of mercy so infinite—can we ever think that it can be neglected without guilt, and may be for ever set at nought with impunity? (2) Again, consider the price paid for our redemption, the exceeding bitterness of the cup which He drained that our souls might be healed. Christ has no recompense except that you should believe and be saved, and in every repenting and returning sinner He sees of the travail of His soul, the reward of all His sufferings, and is satisfied. And if you will not, if all has been suffered for you in vain, surely your ingratitude, cold-heartedness, neglect, must add tenfold terror to the wrath of the Lamb. (3) Remember the plainness of the warnings that are used and the mercy of His invitations. Past mercy will enhance future judgment; the love of Christ will shine at the last day upon the open books; and in its bright beam will stand out, in dark, plain characters, the guilt, the folly, the ingratitude, of those for whom Christ died, and who would not live for Christ.

J. JACKSON, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 780.

REFERENCES: vi. 17.—*Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 153. vii. 1-3. —*Ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 134.

Chap. vii., ver. 6.—"Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand."

THE Servants of God Sealed.

I. The passage from the book of Revelation selected as the Epistle for All Saints' Day, while it carries our thought onward

to the glories of the world to come, is a most striking reminiscence of old Hebrew history. The constitution of the twelve tribes, the names of the sons of Jacob, come into view once more, as it were, on the threshold of eternity, even as the memory of childhood often grows wonderfully fresh again when an old man is about to pass into the other world.

II. We must not fail to notice the great comfort contained in the word "sealed." The expression seems clearly to imply two things: first, that those who bear this seal are recognised by God as belonging to Him; and secondly, that they are safe. As regards the safety of the saints, it is difficult for us to imagine any being endowed with free-will and subject to moral responsibility to be exempt from the possibility of failing; but if we were to follow speculation in such a matter, it would lead to no results. It seems to be clearly revealed to us that part of the blessedness of the saints will consist in their security.

III. Look at the broad, general fact that in the enumeration before us the tribe of Dan is omitted. Of what does this remind us? Surely of this: that in the great gathering of the saints at the last some who have had rich opportunities will not be there. Even in the course of Christian Church history hitherto, communities which were once full of hope have been quite or almost obliterated, just as rivers which in their earlier course flowed full and strong have been lost and become feeble in the sands. And as with communities, so with separate souls: those who have been equal in privilege will not be together in the end.

IV. Asher was an obscure and insignificant tribe, yet of Asher, as well as of Joseph, or Benjamin, or Judah, were sealed twelve thousand. Spiritual blessings do not depend on earthly fame and greatness, or on any questions of mere numerical proportion.

J. S. HOWSON, *Our Collects, Epistles, and Gospels*, p. 161.

Chap. vii., ver. 9.—"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

THE Festival of All Saints.

The Festival of All Saints is related in conception to, yet distinct from, the Festival of All Angels. For while the latter speaks of angelic victory, the former speaks only of human victory over evil. It was considered to be the feast of the

glorification of human nature by Christ. Now what is it which glorifies human nature? It is expressed in the name of this festival: it is saintliness.

I. There are many associations into which to enter is fame: companies of warriors, societies of science, bands of poets, circles of statesmen, orders of honour; but the most ancient, the most memorable, and the most continuous, continuous even for ever and ever, is the order of all the saints. For it is not only an earthly society; it does not belong to one nation alone; it does not seek its members only out of one age of history. It began with the beginning of the race. It has drawn its members out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue. It is existent in the world beyond the grave. The constant, ceaseless work of the society is the overthrow of evil.

II. The war against evil which the Head of the Church and all the army of the saints are waging now will end, not when the victims of evil are damned or destroyed, but when the evil itself in them is consumed. In every soul of man, by the giving of joy or the giving of suffering, by a thousand means, each fitted to a thousand characters, God will do His conquering work. Those who have already won the crown of saintliness are fellow-labourers with Him in the work of redemptive warfare. The power and the life of Christ are not only powerful and living upon earth: He is redeeming all in the other world. He continues to redeem.

III. Note some of the principles of the life of this great society, and apply them to the minor society of the English nation. (1) In the Church of Christ, each true member is an enthusiast in his work. His heart glows; his tongue cannot be basely silent, though often wisely silent. He feels inspired by the Spirit of God within him. He would rather die than be false to Christ. Ought not that to be the feeling of the citizen towards the nation, enthusiasm, not untaught and rude, but cultured by thought on great questions and tempered by the experience of the past? He who feels the enthusiasm of the Church of Christ ought above all men to be freed himself, and to free others, from political apathy. (2) Both the Church of Christ and the English nation have a glorious past. The Christian and the Englishman are both the children of heroes. The freedom of both in their several spheres has been that of slow and dignified growth, and is of that firm, rooted character which creates the reverence which makes love lasting. (3) In the vast society of which I speak, each man lives for his brother,

not for himself; men are united by common love to Christ. We should recognise as Englishmen the same principle. (4) There is one last lesson which the Christian Church teaches us: it condemns, not only local, but also national, selfishness. The time has come in this age to carry out the same principle in the wide politics of the world; the time has come to regulate our relation with other nations by the words, "Do unto other nations as ye would that they should do unto you."

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, p. 290.

Chap. vii., vers. 9, 10.

THE Blessed Saints.

I. The phrase "communion of saints," which is so often on our lips, reminds us that not only is there in heaven a society of just ones made perfect, but also on earth a band of servants of the Lord, who are pressing forward to the high mark of saintliness, who are living a saintly life by reason of their very endeavours to submit to the guidance of a loving Lord. We cannot have sympathy for the saints in heaven unless we have sympathy for the saints on earth, for all the good and noble souls who are working for the Lord in the Church on earth. If the phrase "communion of saints" is to be to us other than a fine-sounding one, emptied of all real meaning, if it is to be to us the centre of a realm of thought which we can never weary of exploring, we must first be assured that the transformation which the Lord has perfected in the saints has been commenced within ourselves. As He perfected that transformation in the saints in glory, so He is still carrying it on in the saints who walk yet on earth in the path of humiliation and duty, and so will He commence and carry it on if we will but trust in Him.

II. Holy men and women there have been in all branches of the Christian Church. Not all their names are inscribed on an earthly roll-call. The true calendar, from which not the name of the humblest saint is absent, is in the Lord's keeping. As we get to know more and more of those who have lived lives of holiness and usefulness, we feel that the limits of any one branch of the Church catholic are too narrow for the flow of our awakened sympathy; and we are fain to acknowledge that God's inspiring love acts upon the hearts not only of His children in our own Church, but also of His children in other Churches and in other lands, and that all Churches in which the life of

Christ is manifested in the lives of His members form but one grand Holy Catholic Church.

H. N. GRIMLEY, *Tremadoc Sermons*, p. 63.

THE Communion of Saints.

I. This passage suggests (1) the universal character of the communion of God's people, and (2) the bond which cemented and still continues to cement it. All persons who are tempted to think that they and those who agree with them alone are in the right, all persons disposed to be exclusive in judging of the characters of others, may learn a lesson of wisdom and charity from the vision of St. John. If they could but look to the end, if they could see the battle of life with the eyes of God and of those whom His Spirit most inspires, they would see that as there are many mansions in our Father's house, so there are many roads that lead to them. Does not All Saints' Day witness for us, first, that all Christ's people are substantially one at heart; secondly, that many are Christ's people who are not thought so by others, and who hardly dare to think themselves so? If we can once believe that Christ, through His Spirit, is the sole Author of all good, we must believe this also. The belief in the communion of saints follows necessarily on the belief in the Holy Ghost.

II. Those whom St. John saw in this vision had all one distinguishing characteristic: suffering followed by purification—purification, not by their own unaided constancy, but by the blood of the Son of God. These are the marks which stamp Christ's servants, the passports which conduct through the gates of the holy city to the steps of the eternal throne. It is to the struggle, the terrible struggle, with temptation, the constant fall, the timid rising again; to the confession of weakness forced upon us by the consciousness of degradation; to the belief that Christ, in our utmost need, has come to us with a free and wholly undeserved pardon; it is to the wounds and scars which the battle has left on us, and which even the Physician of souls can never wholly efface on earth; it is to suffering, to what St. John truly calls "great tribulation," that we ascribe our admission into the kingdom of God. For the youngest, as for the oldest, life must be a process of purification; and that purification can only come from the Lord Jesus Christ.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 188.

THE Great Multitude.

I. The multitude. The sight of a multitude is, in its way,

as attractive as a magnet; we run to see the object which has gathered it together, and this may very properly be done in the present instance. (1) The vastness of the multitude is most remarkable; (2) the variety of the multitude is no less remarkable than the vastness of it: "of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues."

II. Their position. Attaching to their position there is evidently (1) a transcendent honour; (2) a superlative happiness.

III. Their adornment. We notice—(1) the spotless purity of their adornment: "white robes"; (2) its triumphal character: "palms in their hands."

IV. Their worship. (1) The song of their worship is replete with interest, the subject of it is salvation, the object God Himself. (2) The service of their worship is full of interest; it is full of both fervour and harmony.

E. A. THOMSON, *Memorials of a Ministry*, p. 319.

ALL Saints' Day.

I. Let us ask, What is the use of festivals at all? Why should we keep our saints' days and our Christmas Day, our Good Friday and our Ascension Day? One day is not better than another, and all the bishops in the world cannot make it better, nor make it a different day from what it is. But is it not meet and right that we should celebrate our birthdays, as men and women born into the world, and celebrate our benefactors' days, as scholars of this or that foundation, or celebrate our victories or escapes, as sharers in the nation's weal and the nation's glory? and is it not at least as meet and right that as Christians, bound together by a common faith in Christ our Lord, we should celebrate our festival days too, and, lest men should pass over too lightly this or that scene in the Saviour's life, this or that act of devotion, and zeal, and heroic self-sacrifice on the part of His followers in bygone ages, that we should be called upon periodically to refresh our memories on this point or on that? The world at large is so careful and troubled about many things that we may well excuse it if here and there a Mary seems to sit with too rapt a gaze at Jesus's feet while her more active kinsfolk are toiling at life's daily labours.

II. Why should there be a festival for the saints unnamed and unknown? This festival was founded for the very purpose to preserve us from forgetting that men are very poor judges of who God's saints are. It is to remind us that, however much

the world may require of us intellect, or knowledge, or strength, or position before it will give us any honour or allow us to take rank among its great ones, yet there is a company before the throne of the Lamb into whose rank the meek and lowly are welcomed, a company whose example on earth we should do well to imitate, and whose song in heaven we should strive to echo, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

A. JESSOPP, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 129.

REFERENCES: vii. 9, 10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 270. vii. 9-11.—S. A. Brooke, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 55; H. P. Liddon, *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 31.

Chap. vii., vers. 13, 14.

HEAVENLY Raiment.

I. Here, in the text, we are presented to a great, victorious company. These pure, victorious ones are as numerous as they are beautiful; from all nations they come; all languages have they spoken; yet have they all been beaten and bruised with the tribulations of the world, and they have come not only out of affliction, but out of great affliction. They were cleansed; their hearts were cleansed, and their garments too. Often in the world they were dressed in meanness, in shame, in sadness, in toil; but all is changed: instead of meanness there is splendour, instead of weakness strength, instead of a heavy heart garments of praise, instead of shame the robe of purity, instead of toil the dress and the palm that denote victory. But how came they to be dressed meanly in this world? Consider what dress is, and how, though it may represent you if you can attain it, you may be unable to attain the material of which to form dress corresponding to your true character. Our dress is made of that which the world around supplies to us. If it be a stupid world, we cannot be robed in such a dress of bright intelligence as we would fain put on; if it be an evil world, we cannot be robed in a joyful dress full of holy excellence. We cannot clothe ourselves as we could if the general sense of mankind were higher. The victorious ones had been clothed meanly (1) because the state of the world was evil, and (2) because their own state was imperfect.

II. He that cleanses his heart cleanses his raiment, and if your heart be refined by the fires of God, then all that is exterior to you will be washed by the waves of the world. Though all this beautiful apparel of saints in heaven is indeed

the gift of God by the inward work of His Spirit, from within passing outwardly to the very body and the very raiment—I say, though it is the gift of God, in a certain true sense it is woven by ourselves. Man is but a worm, yet he spins material out of which God adorns heaven. "What are these?" said the reverend elder; "whence came they?" he cried with exulting tone. "Son of man, canst thou tell?" Let the youth of the world hear the voice of this elder. These are the choice ones of this earth, the chief in spiritual contests, the agonised, the disparaged, the killed, the flower of the Church's chivalry, who represent in their victorious love and beautiful apparel the whole company of the saved. In the flood and the fire they heard a voice say, "Onward!"; on the steep of the mountain they heard a voice say, "Upward!" And when a sad voice called, "All flesh is grass," the flesh of saint and of sinner, they could answer, "The grass that withereth is clothed in goodly raiment, finer its flowers than kings' robes; and are we not kings and priests unto our God? and, much more, will He not clothe us?" T. T. LYNCH, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 70.

REFERENCES: vii. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1040; A. Mackennal, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 300.

Chap. vii., vers. 13-15.

WHO are Saints?

I. Notice what we certainly do not mean when we speak of men being saints of God. (1) I find no warrant for believing that the asceticism which appears to have so strange a charm for some minds is pleasing to God, and I find a great deal to convince me that it is even contrary to the spirit of Christian liberty. (2) As self-imposed pain, or discomfort, or poverty does not in any way make a man a saint, so neither is it necessary that there should be any pain or discomfort required of us at all I say it is not necessary; I do not say more. Suffering, even for Christ's sake, does not make a man a saint, but saintliness will make any man brave enough to suffer. (3) Mere blamelessness does not make a saint of Christ.

II. Who, then, is the true saint? Our text will lead us to the right answer. (1) First, the saints have passed through great tribulation. The first element of saintliness is sorrow for sin; the truest tribulation is that which remorseful grief for sin occasions. (2) The second element in this sanctity is this: that along with shame and sorrow for sin there should be also faith in the Saviour of sinners, for these saints had washed

their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (3) The third element in this saintliness is a spirit of devotion. They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, not with a formal, ascetic devotion which trusts to times and places too exclusively. But surely there can be no true sanctity without the spirit of prayer, and that spirit of prayer cannot be kept alive without the frequent act of prayer also.

A. JESSOPP, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 139

REFERENCE: vii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1316.

Chap. vii., vers. 14, 15.

WE owe very little debt to those who take this out of the grand signification, and say that it belongs to the "multitudes" of Constantine, or the "Constantine age." I would far rather keep to the simple ideas of my childhood, and see in it nothing but a beautiful description of the saints in heaven. Now of all these beautiful words perhaps the most important, certainly the most instructive, is the word "therefore." For this is what we want to know, not, Are they happy? or, What do they? All that we may leave. There is no doubt about that. But why are they there? How did they come there? This is the question which concerns us.

I. And so I ask, Where in the sentence does "therefore" come? I observe that it comes after two things: "tribulation" and "washing," but directly and strictly only after "washing." We might disconnect the latter part of the sentence from the "tribulation," but we could not separate it from the "washing." The order might be that the "tribulation" leads to the "washing," and the "washing" leads to the glory. But it could not be the "tribulation" without the "washing," though it might be the "washing" without the "tribulation." Never think that affliction takes anybody to heaven. It very often conducts further from it. Affliction may lead to the fountain, and the fountain is in the road to the throne. If you go to the fountain, you will at last find yourself before the throne. But "tribulation," whatever it be, saves no one. Only "the washing the robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb" ever does that.

II. It is very easy to misunderstand that word "tribulation." It sounds like something so very severe. But what I wish to point out is this: that the text does not say that the experience of saints must be very bitter, or

the pain very intense. The word used is "friction," the rubbing which goes to make the fine polish or the exquisite edge. And it amounts to this: "These are they which came out of the refining processes of great friction." And what Christian has not friction?—the friction of his two natures clashing; the friction of his besetting sins; the friction of some character in the world with whom he has to do; the friction of some daily duty; the friction of a constant uneasiness; the friction of some weary trial, some continual sore. If there be no more, there is that. And that at least must be. It may not be of many sorts, or it may not be of great importance; but we have it twice—in St. Paul's exhortation to the Churches of Asia Minor and the elder's testimony to St. John—"We must through much friction"—it is the same word—"We must through much friction enter into the kingdom of God." It may be a comfort to some who have no overwhelming griefs, but who have abundance of wearing, harassing vexations, that even in that they may fulfil the condition.

III. But if the "tribulation" be the inevitable accompaniment, the cleansing is the essential and the primary cause of all saintship. For then has the "tribulation" done its work, when it has humbled and emptied the heart to such a sinking sense of sin as drives it to the fountain of the cross of Jesus. "They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." In the great temple of nature and truth; in the holy places of His handiwork; in the holiest of holies, in His Church, by day, after our feeble power, and by night, when we glorify God by our resting; in the sunshine of the consciousness of saints and the shadows of pain and impotence, we serve God; and this service of ours goes up acceptably through the very same perfume and the same incense of Jesus which makes the service of angels acceptable. And He who is present there is present here; and they know that we have Him, and we know that they have Him. They are perfect reflectors; we are imperfect reflectors. And these, the service, and the presence, and the image, are to be for ever and for ever; and they make "the communion of the saints."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 101.

Chap. vii., vers. 16, 17.

'No More" and "More."

There are four things asserted here:—

I. All need is supplied: "They shall hunger no more, for

the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them." (1) Look at the source of the supply. This is sixfold: (*a*) love which passeth knowledge; (*b*) power to which nothing is hard; (*c*) wisdom Divine and infinite; (*d*) providence minute and universal; (*e*) oneness of feeling without check; (*f*) closeness of relationship. (2) Mark the character of the supply. This is in harmony with the source. The source is love, and the supply is generous. It is well sustained, suitable, varied, acceptable, and grateful to the recipient.

II. All desire gratified. There are four qualities clothing this gratification of desire. (1) It is pure, unselfish; (2) it is full, nothing left to be given; (3) it is wholesome and invigorating; (4) it is Divine, of a godly sort.

III. All trouble prevented. It is impossible for trouble to befall us when God places Himself between us and grief.

IV. All sadness taken away and kept away. Then—(1) weep not for the dead who have died in the Lord; (2) shrink not from a rapid approach to immortality; (3) make not heaven your god, or going to heaven your goal and your end, but remember, nevertheless, that God has heaven prepared for you; (4) praise your Saviour, to whom you owe heaven and every good.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 224.

REFERENCES: vii. 16, 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1800. vii. 17.—*Ibid.*, vol. xi., No. 643; Talmage, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 191; *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 385; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 233.

Chap. viii., ver. 4.—"And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

CHRIST the Bearer of Prayer and Praise.

I. It was a thought very dear to our Master, especially just before He left this earth, to tell His people that they should pray in His name. Five times the direction recurs in those four chapters of St. John which enshrine such legacies of love. In glad obedience, then, to this kind mandate, our Church has been very careful to wind up all its prayers and praises,—for they are one; praise is prayer jubilant, and prayer, as St. Paul teaches us, stripped of thanksgiving, is no prayer at all,—all its prayers and praises with some form of words to express that name of Jesus, equivalent to "through Jesus Christ our Lord." And that final form of doxology and supplication is, indeed, the

committal of the petition or the song to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may be its Bearer to the throne of God. It is sending it up to mingle with the incense. Accordingly, out of all the prayers and collects which are in the Prayer-book, there are only nine which do not end through the name and intercession of Christ. And for those nine there are special reasons. Four are prayers addressed to the Second Person of the Trinity Himself, and therefore of course do not close with the usual termination. These are the prayer of St. Chrysostom, the collect for the third Sunday in Advent, the collect for the first Sunday in Lent, the collect for Trinity Sunday, in part, at least, the prayer before the consecration in the office for the Holy Communion, and the form of consecration of the elements, because that, not ending in prayer, has not the name of the Lord Jesus Christ at the close. The absence of the name of Christ in the collect for Trinity Sunday is to be accounted for by the same principle: that Christ is addressed in the collect. In three others,—the collect for the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, the first of the three collects for Good Friday, and the collect for Ascension,—the whole prayer is so full in its tissue of the person, and the work, and the glory of Christ, that it is really tantamount to an address both directed to Christ, and presented through Christ. And in the only remaining instance of which I am aware,—the prayer pronounced by the bishop before confirming,—it partakes so much of the nature of a blessing that it is to be regarded rather as a benediction than as a supplication.

II. But it may have occurred to some to ask, Why do we not conclude the Lord's Prayer with the name of Christ? Does not the absence of His name mar its evangelical character? And if it be said, It was given before Christ's death and ascension, and therefore it would have been premature if our Lord had taught us to put His name at the end of it, then the suggestion would arise, Ought not the Church to add it? But I believe the right answer to the question is this: First, being a prayer given us by our Lord Himself, it necessarily so associates itself throughout with Him, and makes Him so present to the mind, that if His name be not there, His image is, and we cannot choose but pray it through Christ; and, secondly, as they are our Lord's own words, and therefore not human, they do not need the closing words, "through Christ," for many of the reasons for which other invocations need them, for they ascend to heaven in their own right, by their Divine original.

III. But now let us look more closely what it means when we say, at the end of our prayers, "through Jesus Christ." (1) First, it is a confession of our unworthiness and sinfulness in all our words and thoughts. We claim audience only through another. (2) Secondly, we recognise the great fact that there is no access to God but by Him who is "the Way." There was a barrier, a range of untraversable heights, masses upon masses of sin, between us and God. Christ came and bore away that mountain, and the road was open; He was the Bearer of sin first, that He might be the Bearer of prayer always. (3) But, thirdly, this was not all. The access made, Christ took His place at God's right hand, as High-priest of His people, to receive and present their sacrifices of prayer and praise. The Israelite brought the lamb, but Aaron offered it. So we lay down our heart's best feelings at Jesus's feet, and then Jesus gives them to the Father. (4) And, fourthly, in doing this, Christ makes our prayers what they were not in themselves: fit to enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. But for that, the very best prayer that ever went out of the heart of man would defile heaven; but now God perceives the incense: and just as He sees, not the sinner, but the righteousness of Christ, in which that sinner stands, so He sees, not so much the prayer as the incense which mingles with that prayer; and He is well pleased with the supplication for the incense' sake. Cain's sacrifice, without the lamb, did not go up; Abel's, with it, did. (5) But, fifthly, what we do in the name of another, it is the same as if that other did it. Pray in Christ's name, the prayer is as if Christ prayed it. As Christ represents me in heaven, so, in a sense, I am representing Christ upon earth. And this is the explanation of the greatness of the undertaking which God makes, that whatever we ask in the name of Jesus Christ we shall receive. For, in the name of Christ, I can only ask what I am sure Christ would have asked if He were here. And what am I sure that Christ would have asked if He were here? Only either what He did ask when He was upon earth, or what He has told me that it is in God's mind to give. Therefore when I pray I can only put the name of Christ to a promised or to an unpromised thing subject to the will and glory of God.

IV. Note three most happy results of thus making Jesus the Bearer of your prayers. (1) First, He separates and refines those prayers which are put into His hands to offer. You have been asking, perhaps, some thing which would not be good for you to have. Christ does not present that. You give Him

your mixed nosegay; He takes out the weeds, and offers only the flowers. (2) Secondly, He will add something to the prayers you give Him. "The wounded side of Christ," George Herbert says, "is the believer's post-bag"; and thus he ends his sweet poem, with these words out of the mouth of Christ:—

> "Or if hereafter any of my friends
> Will give me of this kind, the door
> Shall still be open; what he sends
> I will present, and somewhat more,
> Not to his hurt. Sighs will convey
> Anything to me. Hark, despair! away!"

(3) And, thirdly, what you have once really entrusted to Christ, you need be careful about no more. Some persons are anxious about their prayers when they have said them, how they will speed. There is no need; you may leave all with Christ; it is all now a part of His undertaking.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 29.

REFERENCES: ix. 6.—*Homilist*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 345. x. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 11. x. 5, 6.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 77. x. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 106.

Chap. xi., ver. 12.—"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither."

THE Great Voice from Heaven.

This is a world in which there is no standing still. Ceaseless progress is the law of nature. Everything is going on, and in our lives we feel it often, and sometimes we feel it sadly; there is no pause nor cease. Here in truth we have no continuing city; our feet are not set upon solid land; from birth to death we are carried on by a rapid current against which there is no striving. Now there are just two ways by which men can advance: the one leads upward, and its end is heaven; the other leads downward, and its end is perdition.

I. The voice of God comes to us from heaven and says to us, "Come up hither." The new voice of God speaks not to the ear, but to the heart. The whole Bible is a great voice from heaven. Revelation furnishes us with a continuous proof that it is the upward path which God would have us choose from the two that are before us.

II. A second voice that invites us up to heaven is that of our blessed Saviour. What was the Redeemer's whole appearance on earth but one earnest, unceasing, lifelong entreaty

that men would turn to God? And the Saviour even yet appears to remind us of His earthly travail and sorrow, and to whisper to us, "As ye would not that all that should prove in vain, come up hither."

III. The blessed Spirit, too, adds His voice to that which invites us towards heaven. The whole scope and object of His working is to make us fit for heaven, is an indication of His design and His wish that we should go up thither. The Spirit, the Purifier, as He makes us holier and better, thus fitting us for a clearer atmosphere and a nobler company, is ever whispering within us that it must be a higher life in which virtue will be perfect, and another world in which hearts will be pure.

IV. The voice of our dear friends who have fallen asleep in Jesus invites us to "come up hither." Let us plant our feet on the rock, and take not one step further in the evil way, for to-morrow may end our path, and to-day is the accepted time.

A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, p. 283.

REFERENCE: xi. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 488; W. Gledden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 136.

Chap. xi., ver. 15.—**"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."**

THE Triumph of Christianity.

This book of the Apocalypse is confessedly one of those Scriptures that Scripture itself speaks of as "hard to be understood." Yet it must not on that account be neglected. Nay, perhaps, on that very account it is deserving of the most painstaking study.

I. Note well the topography, or, as I might truly say, the geography, of the text. The event concerning which this seventh angel is sounding, and which occasions these great voices of jubilation in heaven, is not an event which is happening in the region of heaven; but it is an event which is to occur on this earth. They are rejoicing over this event which is thus foreshadowed: that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Through the whole of Scripture, it is this earth, which was the scene of the usurper's conquest, and the scene of the Redeemer's conflict with him, and the scene of the Redeemer's travail, and toil, and agony, and shame, and death, and the scene of all His Church's conflicts and sufferings, that is yet to be the theatre of His triumphs.

He is not to win in some ghostly region far away, and leave this world to the devil or to ashes. But here, in this tangible world, is He yet to triumph, and over the field of His sufferings is He yet to wield His sceptre. The prayer that has been going up from the Church for two millenniums shall yet receive its glorious answer, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

II. Let me next observe that, as an earnest of the final triumph, there has already been a partial fulfilment of this prophecy. Has nothing been done yet to make "the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ"? Take a map of Europe and see; take the page of history and see. All along the line there has been victory. Though the enemy has vastly outnumbered the Church's little armies, and though there has been hard fighting, and though it has suffered reverses and repulses, and though its sufferings have been great and its martyrs many, yet defeat it has never known up till now. And though the battle is still prolonged, and its final victory not actually grasped, yet all is tending that way, and the issue cannot be doubtful. The Church's

> "Battle once begun,
> Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft, is ever won."

R. GLOVER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 371.

Chap. xi., ver. 15 (with 1 Cor. xv., vers. 24, 28).—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

THE Coming of the Kingdom the Sure Hope of the Church.

When we read these passages, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever," and again, "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all and in all," we are transported in thought to the utmost verge of future history. The end stands in contrast to the beginning. Sin began in man putting God off the throne of his heart and will; redemption ends in "God being all and in all." Again, we have seen how Israel was trained to the idea of an invisible King, and how all the national institutions of law, temple, monarchy, priesthood, were to be witnesses for Him, being pictures of an ideal state. In the shattering of the earthly symbolism and the advent of Christ, the training passed from the narrow limits of a nation to the whole world,

and from external domain to inward and spiritual obedience. The true theocracy is reached when "the end comes," and "the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of the Lord." The advance of that kingdom of God is by the increasing recognition of the truth, the truth of God and the truth of humanity as in Christ, sin and evil passing away as the mind of Christ possesses the spirit of man. But in what sense can the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ?

I. The kingdoms of the world are something more than the various political states—empire, monarchy, or republic—into which nationalities are divided. The true kingdoms of the world are the moral forces and interests which bear sway over human life. There are the kingdom of commerce, with its penetrating influences, the kingdom of science, with its vast interests, the kingdom of literature, of art, of public opinion, all of which govern in that inner sphere which gives shape to history and character to movements. When we weigh what these kingdoms are we can perceive the possibility of their becoming the kingdoms of the Lord without any arrestment of movement or any shock to the methods in which they now control society. Life need not be of the world, but "the pride of life" constitutes it worldly. If we take away "the lust" and "the pride," then "the eye," and "the flesh," and "life" remain, but purified and true parts of the kingdom of God.

II. From these hints we can imagine the kind of victory secured by the coming of the kingdom of God. Already we can see how the aspect of civilisation has been changed by the inward influence of the Christian spirit, as in the case of marriage, slavery, and a thousand cruelties that have passed away as the mist vanishes when the sun arises in its strength. Let us imagine the diffusive power of the heavenly leaven to have penetrated the entire "lump" of human interest. To believe in the possibility of such an end is itself ennobling. It is good for us even to hope that Christ will yet reign, not by the forceful putting down of all authority, but by winning the willing homage of every heart.

D. MACLEOD, *Christ and Society*, p. 107.

REFERENCES: xi. 15.—J. Halsey, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxiii., p. 264. xi. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1621. xii. 7.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 337. xii. 7-9.—H. S. Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxvi., p. 209. xii. 10.—*Expositor*,

1st series, vol. ii., p. 405. xii. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1237; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 77. xii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1502.

Chap. xii., ver. 16.—"And the earth helped the woman."

SCIENCE and the Church.

The "woman" mentioned here is a symbol of the New Testament Church. She is represented as pursued by the devil, who ejects from his mouth a river of water after her. Just then the earth opens; the deluge is swallowed up, so the woman is saved. Hence we can catch from so rapidly flitting a vision at least as much as this welcome proposition: nature is on the side of genuine religion; science is ready now to be helpful to the Church when it needs succour.

I. Note the somewhat ungenerous way in which the woman has been treating the earth in modern times. There is a violence of prejudice in the minds of many of God's people which is almost inexplicable. God is not going to suffer the kingdom of grace to be overthrown by contradictions that men will discover in the kingdom of nature; He is King in both kingdoms, and Christ once said that even Beelzebub could not stand divided against himself.

II. Note a few of the forms of actual help which natural science of every sort has already furnished, thus exhibiting its real friendliness. We notice (1) its answer to what have been termed the unconscious prophecies of the Bible. (2) Science gives a constant rebuke to impertinent cavils which petulant objectors are in the habit of urging. (3) Science exemplifies its friendship for the Church in the illustration of difficult doctrines which it furnishes. (4) Science offers a reconciliation of the paradoxes of reason and faith in the Scriptures. (5) Science offers positive help in the interpretation of obscure passages in the word itself.

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 35.

Chap. xiv., ver. 1.—"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads."

THE Communion of Saints.

The communion of saints is (1) the restoration of fellowship

between God and man; (2) the restoration of the fellowship of men with each other.

I. Let us learn from it that we can never be lonely or forsaken in this life. Our Lord has promised, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." And in Him all His saints are with us too. No trial can isolate us; no sorrow can cut us off from the communion of saints. There is but one thing in which the sympathy of Christ has no share, and that is the guilt of wilful sin. The faith is the common consciousness and life of the elect, and they who stand for it, although they stand alone against all the world, are never alone, for all the companies of heaven and all the generations of the Church are at their side. Kneel down, and you are with them; lift your eyes, and the heavenly world, high above all perturbation, hangs serenely overhead. Only a thin veil, it may be, floats between.

II. Let us learn further, by the reality of this heavenly fellowship, to live less in this divided world. If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us, and if no love of the Father, then no communion with His kingdom. Between these two we must make our choice. We are between two cities, the one visible, the other invisible; the one an object of sense, the other of faith; the one garish, splendid, and tumultuous, the other calm, glorious, and serene: on the one side, the world and this earthly life, with its fair show, luring gifts, bright promises, gilded ambition; on the other, the city of God, the fellowship of saints, the sympathy of Christ, the love of the Father, the beatific vision.

III. Let us learn from the communion of saints to live in hope. They who are now at rest were once like ourselves. Their life was once homely and commonplace. While on earth they were not arrayed in white raiment, but in apparel like that of other men, unmarked and plain, worn and stained by time and trial. Only one thing there is in which we are unlike them: they were common in all things except the uncommon measure of their inward sanctity. In all beside we are as they, only it is now our turn to strive for the crown of life.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 303.

REFERENCES: xiv. 1-3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 110; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 17. xiv. 2, 3.—J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 425. xiv. 3.—G. Calthrop, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 207; Talmage, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 92. xiv. 4.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 4th series, p. 89.

Chap. xiv., ver. 6.—"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

THE Everlasting Gospel.

Some one not long ago published a book with the title "Gospels of Yesterday." It discussed the writings of several authors who in our generation have caught the popular ear, and analysed their doctrines with keen incisiveness. Gospels of yesterday—how many there have been of them. They lasted as long as they could, but the world outgrew them. There is only one Gospel which is everlasting, which can pass from country to country, from continent to continent, and be everywhere at home; which time cannot wither nor custom stale; which has the safe and certain reversion of all the future. Now why is this? What makes the Gospel of Christ everlasting? To this question I give two answers. First, it is a message to what is universal in man; and secondly, it is a message to what is peculiar in every man.

I. Its universal message. The reason why so many gospels have been doomed to become gospels of yesterday has been because they have addressed themselves to what is transient or partial in human nature. Religions have been the religions of single tribes or single countries, and have not been adopted for other parts of the world; philosophies have addressed themselves to select sections of that community, like that one which inscribed over the entrance to its school in Athens the intimation, "Let no one ignorant of mathematics enter here." Men have been hailed as saviours of society because they have been able to give relief from a need pressing at some particular time, or because their doctrines have fallen in with some passing phase of popular sentiment. But the glory of Christianity is that its teaching is addressed to what is most characteristic in human nature, and absolutely the same in all members of the human race, whether they be rich or poor, whether they inhabit the one hemisphere or the other, and whether they live in ancient or modern times. The three great watchwords of the Gospel—the soul, sin, and eternity—which it is uttering continually wherever its voice is heard at all, are enough to show why it is an everlasting Gospel. Nowhere in the wide world and at no period in the lapse of ages can human beings be found to whom these words will not have all the reality and all the interest of life and death, and if the Gospel can tell how the infinitely precious soul is to be saved, how sin is to be

overcome and blotted out, and how eternity is to be transmuted from a dream of terror into a home and an inheritance, then it can never lack an audience.

II. Its particular message. The Gospel has a message for the difference in each specimen of human nature, and for each quarter of the globe and each age of the world, as well as for that which is common to all. God has a special message for every age. His Gospel has a word in season for every condition of life, for the child, and the young man in his prime, and for old age, a word for the multitude and a word for the few. The Chinese, when they accept the Gospel, will find secrets in it which the British have never discovered; the twentieth century will discover phases of the Christian life which are lacking to the nineteenth. We have not exhausted Christ, and we have not exhausted the Gospel of Christ.

J. STALKER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xli., p. 397.

REFERENCE: xiv. 6.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 122.

Chap. xiv., ver. 12.—"Here is the patience of the saints."

THERE are mainly three conditions required in order to the attainment of the grace of patience.

I. Learn to look on all trying circumstances from the true point of view. The first and most natural view of them is that they destroy our ease. The sense of injury or annoyance, the soreness at the unkindness or disappointment—this occupies us, and the one longing is that the cause of pain may be removed, that at any cost we may be freed from the unwelcome pressure. Thence arises the restless impatience which is the source of some of our worst temptations. We need to rise above this estimate of trial, to look at it on a different side, to view it as God views it. As in mounting a hilly range, when looking down from a higher eminence on points which were above us as we commenced the ascent, their aspect is altogether changed from the mere effect of change in our point of view, so we need to rise above the first appearance of the trial, above the mere temporary effects, separating from it the selfish aspect, the idea of injury, or hardship, or personal annoyance, to rise high enough to apprehend the Divine will regulating it, the love restraining it, lest it become heavier than we are enabled to bear, the virtue which God intended to work in us by its means.

II. The second condition is the self-sacrifice which alone can surrender inward sensibilities to be chastened as God wills.

III. The third condition is the habitual study of the life of Jesus, which cherishes as a reality a spirit of patience. No impulse can rise in rebellion before the face of the Crucified.

T. T. CARTER, *Sermons*, p. 292.

Chap. xiv., vers. 12, 13.

ALL Saints.

I. Our text shows us the chief graces which have made the saints what they are: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." So then the saint-like graces on which we are invited to gaze are faith and patience. Patience says, "Do not take for granted that you have failed because the result at present seems poor." The end is not yet. Look with suspicion on rapidly won victories. Those master-builders who have been permitted to raise up the grandest edifices, either of personal piety or of extensive reforms, have generally been men who have passed through repeated disappointments, and by failing often have been taught to build circumspectly, to examine the soil, and to lay warily every stone. It is interesting often to see on its secular side the operation of a grand Christian grace. Some who would scorn patience at the hand of a saint may reverence her when she comes from the hand of a statesman. An instructive story has reached us of the most commanding of English Ministers. One day, we are told, the conversation turned on the quality most required in a Prime Minister. One said eloquence, another knowledge, another toil. "No," said the man who bore the burden for seventeen years; "it is patience."

II. Patience and faith are sister-graces. The saints clung to the powers of the world to come. They were not satisfied with what they saw. Faith is still, as it always has been, the salt of the earth, the one thing which prevents mankind from becoming utterly corrupt and keeps open the ladder of communication between God and man. Nor is it always acting on the defensive. The faith of the saints, the firm trust in God which fills the souls of all His true servants, has been the author of all the great achievements which redeem the history of the world from vulgarity and from selfishness. There is nothing impossible for those who believe in Christ, and are content to bide God's time.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 71.

REFERENCE: xiv. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1219.

Chap. xiv., ver. 13.—"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

THE Immortality of Good Work.

This is a benediction; it is a benediction, too, falling where we are accustomed to look for anything else but felicitation. "Waste," "decay," "death," are words which usually bring only the most gloomy associations; but in the New Testament, more and more as it goes on toward its consummation, the brightest words, the strongest tokens of joy and of triumph, overhang these desolate places; and where men have been accustomed to set fear as a sentinel, to wet the place with tears, there in Christianity we see banners set up for victory, and we see all cheer and all comfort predicated of that which has been the world's dread and the world's curse.

I. We regard it as strange when energetic and useful men are cut off. Men cling to their work by that very force which enables them to be useful. We could not be what we are appointed to be in this life if we were so indifferent to our tasks and responsibilities that we could let them go easily; and this very tenacity, this very life adhesion, becomes at last a hindrance. So long as we are bound to this life, we are bound to be interested in the things of this life; and men cling to their work as if that were nature, when it is nature *in transitu*, or when it is nature partial or relative to one particular period of our age; and when persons are taken out of life in the midst of strength and function, men marvel. They cannot understand why those who are useful should be removed. But do you forget that dying makes but very little void in this world? Indeed, after Christ died He lived more efficaciously than when He was alive. The death of the Apostle stopped nothing, but sped much. No age was ever left without men. We are poor in our conception, but God is rich. He that could raise up seed to Abraham from the very stones need not look about much, nor mourn that men, one and another, drop out from the functions of life; yet it is natural that we should do so. They who have the responsibility, they who supervise the labour, they who must replace the men that are gone, think it strange that those who are well equipped and of the right spirit should be taken out of life.

II. But the consideration of triumph is that men do not cease their work. They never die. The irksome part of their

labour they rest from; but their works go after, go on with, or have gone before them. A man's life is not simply what you see. The effects of a man's life are not simply those things which you can count, measure, or describe. He who lives in earnest, striving to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, or in the spi it of Christ, throws into life elements which never die out even here—elements that are not witnesses; that have no report; that come not with observation; that are immeasurable; but that are more real a thousand times than the things which are visible.

H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 60.

I. There seem to be two points to be discussed in the text. (1) What is meant by dying in the Lord, and (2) for what reason or reasons are those who die in the Lord to be pronounced blessed? As to the former of the two, it may be well for us to note that there is a peculiar significance about the expression "in the Lord." The Scriptures of the Old Testament, and even the Scriptures of the New, make much of the lawgiver Moses, and Moses perhaps was the man who more than any other man who ever lived has influenced the fortunes of Israel, and through Israel the fortunes of the human race. But although men may follow Moses and obey the precepts which he gave, you never heard any of them spoken of as being "in Moses." And, again, when we come to the New Testament, we find the Apostle Paul put prominently forward as one of the greatest of the inspired teachers whom God has sent for the instruction and guidance of mankind. Yet neither do you meet with the expression "in Paul" or any conceivable equivalent for it. It is obvious that the expression conveys more than the idea of respecting a teacher, or of imitating an example, or obeying the injunctions of one who has a right to command us. It implies a close and living personal union, which is real, though it may be mysterious, and which shows its existence in certain unmistakable results produced upon our heart and conduct. A Christian is a man who is in Christ, and who abides or remains in Him. The man must die in the Lord as well as live in the Lord, if we are to pronounce him blessed.

II. The reasons for the proclamation of blessedness. They are two in number: (1) they rest from their labours; (2) their works do follow them. The person of the man is accepted for Christ's sake; his works come afterwards. A man cannot take with him his riches, his honours, his worldly position and

successes; these things will drop off him as he enters the cold waters of death. All that will go with him is his character and the results of the influence which he has exerted upon the character of others; and in this respect eternity will be but a continuation and prolongation of the present life.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 1163.

THE Blessed Dead.

I. The dead that die in the Lord. The term hardly needed much nice definition when to live in the Lord meant almost certainly persecution, and possibly martyrdom. To die in the Lord was the end of those who had lived in the Lord, and few were likely to make that profession who had not taken up the cross and followed Christ in the way. To die in the Lord is to die in possession of all that the Lord, by His incarnation and passion, has won for man; to die in the Lord is to pass up to live with Him. What life do you take through death to that world? Is it a fool's paradise which you are dreaming of there, or the Lord's? It is simply a question of at-homeness. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, who have lived with Him here, talked with Him, wrought for Him, and have pined for more perfect possession of all that makes the holy beauty of His character and glory of His life.

II. Wherein are they blessed who die in the Lord? What is it which transmutes man's great terror into an angel of benediction, and makes that which nature shudders at a birth into a world of bliss? Here we rise into another region: a region of intense, conscious, joyous vitality; a region of intelligent, responsible, glorious activity, in which nothing that makes the dignity, the grandeur, of the burden of life is laid down, but only the pain. (1) Because death is birth to the believer, and birth is ever blessed. This is not the noon of life, but its struggling dawn; not its summer, but its bleak and wintry spring. Our high life is the seed in the ground which is growing, struggling into form. Blessed are the dead, for they are born, exiled from the body, at home with the Lord. (2) Born out of a life which is a long pain to a life which is a long bliss. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." (3) They pass out of relations and fellowships which are ever changing to those which abide and enlarge their ministries through eternity. (4) Blessed are they, for they are for ever beyond the reach of all that may imperil the prize.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 320.

THE Blessedness of the Dead in Christ.

Some years ago, when worshipping in one of the churches of the canton of Glarus, in Switzerland, I could not but be struck with the truth of the remark that there, as in some other parts of that wonderful country, the mountains look in at the windows. Wherever there was an opening, some part of a giant mountain could be seen looking in, as with a lofty and yet kindly eye; and the effect was all the more striking that in that grey and venerable town where I was more than three and a half centuries before the great Swiss reformer Zwingli had begun that work which was to have such consequences for his country and for the world. I have been impressed with the likeness of the relation of heaven to the Church below in the book of Revelation. Everywhere, so to speak, heaven looks in at the windows; and there are not only looks and sympathies, but voices, reminding those engaged in the earthly worship that a higher company is not far off from any one of them, and that where the shadow now falls the summit is also near. Considering the words of the text as in general descriptive of the heavenly blessedness, I shall endeavour to answer three questions regarding it which are here suggested:—

I. How is this heavenly blessedness attested? We all profess to believe in heaven. How do we know that there are such a place and such a state? If we cannot give a good answer, the Apostle John could. Could he have written all this, even had he wished it, without inspiration from God? If the Apostles had seen all that they testified, would they not have been less than men if they had doubted it? And shall we be wiser men than they if we disbelieve it? But their testimony, of an outward kind, has an inward voucher to its own authenticity. It bears the stamp of the heaven whence it professes to come. Here is a heaven of holiness and purity, of likeness to God, and fellowship to Christ, and eternal worship, contemplation, and praise. Did this dream come out of the human mind and heart? Then there is a testimony in living epistles, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. This is our third evidence of there being a heavenly world, what may be called the evidence from Christian character. Had you been in company with the Apostle John, you would have said, "Here is heaven begun." The Christian Church in all its graces and in all its virtues, as it is a preparation for heaven, so is it a prophecy of heaven.

II. How is this heavenly blessedness gained? (1) Faith is needful to give a title to the heavenly blessedness; (2) holy obedience is necessary.

III. How is this heavenly blessedness to be enjoyed? (1) There is the rest of the worker; (2) there is the continued influence of the work.

J. CAIRNS, *Christ the Morning Star*, p. 160.

THE Christian's Death.

I. Death is a curse. My text says, "Blessed are the dead." Still death is a curse. Separate and apart from the consolations of Christian faith, death is a tremendous evil. Nature shrinks from it shuddering. In most cases death presents the unmistakable features of a tremendous curse, being attended with sufferings which, however unpleasant to think of, it is well to anticipate, that we may be prepared for the worst, and, fortified by faith, may withstand the rude shocks of dissolution.

II. Death is a blessing. The union which is formed between Christ and His people being one of incorporation, and not merely one of co-operation, what the one is, the other is; and where the one is, the other is; and as the one feels, the other feels: and as our bodies and their limbs have all things in common, or the branches and trunk of a tree have sap in common, so Jesus and His people have all things in common. To be in Christ, then, to be in the Lord, implies that we shall infallibly enjoy all the blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which He shed His blood to purchase, these being secured to us by the great oath of God and the bonds of a covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure.

III. Death is a blessing as introducing us into a state of rest. (1) At death the believer rests from the toils of life. (2) At death the believer rests from the cares of life. Faith is often weak, and man is fearful; and so our life has many a troubled dream, that fills those with fears and terrors who are all the time safely folded in a Father's arms. (3) At death the believer rests from the griefs of life. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord will deliver him out of them," if never before, at death. Death cures all griefs; and his own best physic and physician, he applies the most healing balm to the wounds his own hands have made. No more true or beautiful way of announcing a good man's death than the old-fashioned phrase, "He is at rest."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 372.

Chap. xiv., ver. 13.—"Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours."

I. Observe that St. John introduces the subject with a singular solemnity; "Yea," as though it was worthy of some special asseveration;—"Yea, the Spirit saith." He said all that John had written; but He said this with a stronger emphasis: "Yea, the Spirit saith,"—for the exceeding comfort of all the weary ones, who are now fighting through the hard day,—"Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." From their "labours" they "rest," not from their "works," but from the pain of work, for "their works do follow them." There are two senses in which we may take this last clause: the record of their works follows them to testify to the grace of God, to witness to them in the day of judgment, and to be the measure of their eternal reward; or, more literally, their works themselves do follow them, what they used to do and loved to do for God in this present world. It follows them, to be taken up again in some higher and holier manner there. The tastes they formed, the services in which they delighted, the ministrations which they occupied here—they have not ceased to be, but are sweetly renewed in that higher state. And is it not an animating thought to think that all we now try to do for God is the beginning of something which we are to continue for ever and for ever, and for ever and for ever to continue to improve to do? Is it not very pleasant to realise those we love there carrying on still their loving occupations, which we remembered in them so well when they were with us here? But the struggle, the toil, the distress of work, is past for ever. "They rest from their labours," even though, ay, and because "their works do follow them." Work is never a hurtful thing. Work, in its own essence, is all happiness; it is the worry of work, it is the anxiety of work, it is the disproportionateness of work, it is the unkindness of work, it is the clashing of work, it is the incompleteness of work, it is the disappointment of work, this is the trouble and the discipline. Take away these, and work is heaven. Therefore we have all the elements of perfect joy combined when we say, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

II. To this last release, not from "work," but from "labour," we mount up by many steps. The fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives the series of steps. There is a rest or release into which we all enter the moment we be-

lieve. "We which believe do enter into rest." It is a rest or release from the feeling of condemnation, from that awfully oppressive feeling of unforgiven sin. From that time "labour" continues, perhaps increases. The sin is more violent; and therefore the labour is more severe. But then it is the labour of a lightened heart; it is the labour of love. After that, after forgiveness, gradually another release takes place. The Christian escapes from the dominion of sin. It becomes rather his servant, that sometimes rebels, than his master, that always rules; and that is the release from the thraldom of the tyranny of sin. Nevertheless, after that release, sin is there. It meets him everywhere; he is never safe from it. He is pained by its contact; he is humbled by its force; he is grieved by its outbreak. He sees it; he feels it; he breathes it; he lives in the atmosphere of it, till at last a moment comes that he is released even from the touch, from the sound, from the breath, from the possibility, of it. And so the believer travels up, in a series of releases, step by step, to that grand dismissal at last when he is set free from the whole warfare of the cross of Christ. But what will the release be? You will come down from your watch-tower. How you are obliged to be always going up to that watch-tower! And how your eye is strained to descry the approach of evil, of which you knew it was somewhere, but from what quarter you could never tell how it would come, often from the most unlikely! And so night and day you had to keep your weary guard there. You may sheathe that sword; you may lay down that shield. There is no adverse occurrent now. Every one that rose up against you is laid dead at your feet. It is peace, peace, inviolable peace, and peace that can never be broken. And painful exercises there are now no more, no rushing tides of contending influences, no antagonism of a double nature, no warring of the flesh against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, no wrestling with the evil one, no importunate prayer, no baffling mysteries to the tired intellect, no delicate balancing of truth and error, no efforts failing through their own violence, no sinking of the spirit, no eclipse of faith, no mountains of pride, no valleys of despair. The besetting sin rears its conquered head again and again no more. All those are labours past, and, like all labours past, bitter in the present, pleasant, very pleasant, very humbling, but very glorifying to God, to look back upon. And the very capability of sin is gone. It would be as impossible to have a wrong as it is now

impossible to have a right thought. You cannot help but love God intently, and please Him absolutely, for nature and grace run in one channel, in one world; and the whole man is one perfect image of one infinite Creator. Then, as I believe, in token of it all, God will give to every discharged soldier "the white stone, with the new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it," the sign of His approving favour, our dismission from sin, our admission into everlasting glory. So will the release come on; and that will be the Easter joy of our resurrection morn.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 45.

Chap. xiv., ver. 13.—"That they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

DEGREES of Glory.

We are justified casually by God's eternal grace; we are justified effectively by the blood of Jesus Christ; we are justified instrumentally by faith; we are justified evidentially by good works. Or, to put this a little more plainly, we are justified before God—*i.e.*, we are accounted righteous and acceptable—only by the faith in Christ which His Spirit creates and moves in our hearts. But how are we justified to ourselves in believing that we are justified before God? how are we justified to the world in saying that we are justified? By our good works. This harmonises the apparent discrepancy between St. Paul and St. James. We are "justified by our works," as St. James says, in believing that we are "justified" before God, as St. Paul says, "by faith" only. "They rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

I. Observe that it does not say, "They rest from their *works*"—for that would imply that where they are gone they cease from work, which is entirely the contrary to the fact—but, "They rest from *their labours*; and their works do follow them." Now labour is work's distress. Work itself as such is joy. There is no happiness without work. Every man must work, some with their heads, some with their minds, some with their hands; but all must work. The secret of all the wretchedness that there is in the world is the absence of work. Whoever you are, you can never lead a happy life if you do not work, really work, work hard. If your circumstances do not define your work for you, you must define your work for yourself. You must work. It is God's universal law in His government of this world, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat"—eat of any of

the pleasant things which I spread for My children. But then, in this present state, the law of work has its dark shadows: fatigue, infirmity, too great tension, ill-health, disappointments, mistakes, waitings, suspensions, and sins. There is the miserable, depressing sense of inadequacy for the task; there is the perplexity of what is the line of duty and all the entanglements of self on every point; there is the feeling, "After all, all this is but a drop out of the ocean of misery!" I do not wonder that even in His work, Jesus "sighed." Now, all this, and much more, makes the labour. The Greek word has for its root the verb "to cut"—it cuts to the heart. It is like that other word, "Take no thought for the morrow," which is in the original, "Do not cut or split your heart about the morrow." But yet all this that cuts to the quick is necessary now to make work what work was intended to be in this stage of existence. The labour of work is the discipline of work; it is the education, the discipline, the school. It was not the work which was the punishment of Adam and Eve—doubtless they would have worked in paradise—but it was the excess of the work above the power of the being of the worker, work's pressure: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." And therefore, because it is the needful discipline, the rule holds good, whether it be the bread for the body, or whether it be the bread for the mind, or whether it be the bread for the soul, you can never get what is really satisfying but by dint of real, hard fag, hard toil: "in the sweat of thy brow." It is not work only, but it is labour, which is the condition of the peace of life. Therefore it was that Christ chose the word—for He knew how wide it was—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

II. If a man is in Christ, and that man works, and that man casts the labour of his work upon Christ, its vexings and its harassings, then that man has entered into rest so far, for he does the work, and he casts the labour. Absolutely, however, death is the point when the believer perfectly and for ever exchanges labour for work. Death might be defined as going from labour to work. For do not think that those busy minds which were so active and so earnest here when they were among us, who are gone to their prepared places, are leading there a life of mere receptive enjoyment or meditative peace. They have not so unlearned their natures. "His servants shall serve Him." "They rest not day and night," while they glorify God, in His boundless ministrations, still

"each upon his wing," while he soars away for activity in his vast circumference. It is tolerably clear, then, what it is the Spirit saith when He saith, "Yea, that they may rest from their labours."

III. We have now to examine a little further how it is that "their works do follow them." It certainly admits of the interpretation that those works in which Christians are engaged here continue to interest them in the next world. Why should it not be so? Do we not make too much of death if we look upon it as destroying any of the interests of life? For what is death but as if a person should go into some foreign land? He can see no longer what he used to love so well, and what he called home. But do those things which lie beyond the sea become indifferent to him? Are his affections closed to them? Nay, are not those things, in some sense, dearer to him than ever they were before? Surely we may believe that those high and busy enterprises, which had so large a place in the hearts of God's children here, are not forgotten by them in their perfected happiness! The conversion of the Jews, the missions to the heathen, the flock, the schools, things once so near and bound up with their very life-blood—do you think they are passed away? And if not, if the interest lasts, and is imperishable, then may we not say that, in this way, "their works do follow them"? Nay, may we not go a step further, and hold it probable that there is a continuity between the special tastes, and occupations, and habits of thought, which characterised us here, and that which shall stamp our condition and our services in another state? Do not let us make the gulf between the two worlds greater than it is. There are two offices which the works we have done on earth are fulfilling in another world. (1) The one is to be our witnesses in the day of judgment. The matter which will be examined into at that tribunal will not be acts, but character. It will be, Did you love God? What was Christ to you? What were you to Christ? But, to determine the answer to that inquiry, acts will stand out in evidence; words will be an index. Therefore "by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." Deeds of charity will stand out in evidence: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me"; "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Thus, then, just as our justification was justified by our good works when we were here, so there

God, though He needs it not, will be justified before the universe, in His final award to all men, by their works, which will be manifest then before men and angels. (2) The second purpose for which our "works will follow us" will be to determine, as I believe, the measure of our glory and our place in heaven, our place, not geographically, but morally, not so as to separate one saint from another—for the communion will be perfect in all saints—but just as Christians here meet in one, but yet are of various capacities and degrees, so there it will be in glory: they are all one, all filled, but the vessels are of different sizes.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 90.

REFERENCES: xiv. 13.—S. King, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 51; R. Thomas, *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 40; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 92; Bishop Barry, *Sermons for Passiontide and Easter*, p. 104; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 262; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 83; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 363. xiv. 15.—H. Robjohns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 271; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 142.

Chap. xv., ver. 2.—"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast . . . stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

THE Sea of Glass Mingled with Fire.

With all the mysteriousness of the book of Revelation, one thing we are sure of: that in it we have the summing up of the moral processes of all time. There may or may not be a special meaning discoverable in its pictures, but this there certainly is. The verse which is our text represents, in a highly figurative way, the result of all moral contest. We may call that our subject.

I. Those who had gotten the victory over the beast stood on a sea of glass mingled with fire. What is the meaning of this imagery? I confess that I do not pretend to know in full what is intended in the Revelation by this term "the beast." But, on the principle which I have just stated, I think it certainly means, in its largest sense, the whole power of evil in all its earthly manifestations, everything that tempts the soul of man to sin or tries his constancy with suffering. The sea of glass is evidently the type of repose, of rest, of peace; and fire, with its quick, eager, searching nature, testing all things, consuming what is evil, purifying what is good, never resting a moment, never sparing pain—fire all through the Bible is the type of

active trial of every sort, of struggle. "The sea of glass," then, "mingled with fire," is repose mingled with struggle. It is peace, and rest, and achievement, with the power of trial and suffering yet alive and working within it. It is calmness still pervaded by the discipline through which it has been reached.

II. This is our doctrine, the permanent value of trial—that when a man conquers his adversaries and his difficulties it is not as if he had never encountered them. Their power, still kept, is in all his future life. They are not only events in his past history: they are elements in all his present character. His victory is coloured with the hard struggle that won it. Just as the whole fruitful earth, deep in its heart, is still mingled with the ever-burning fire that is working out its chemical fitness for its work, so the life that has been overturned and overturned by the strong hand of God, filled with the deep, revolutionary forces of suffering, purified by the strong fires of temptation, keeps its long discipline for ever, roots in that discipline the deepest growths of the most sunny and luxuriant spiritual life that it is ever able to attain.

III. There are several special applications of our doctrine to the Christian life which it is interesting to observe. (1) It touches all the variations of Christian feeling. The redeemed world—all the strong vitality which that name records will be the fire that will mingle with the glassy serenity of its obedient and rescued life. (2) Here we have the picture of the everlasting life. What will heaven be? I find manifold fitness in the answer that tells us that it shall be a sea of glass mingled with fire. Is it not a most graphic picture of the experience of rest, always pervaded with activity, of calm, transparent contemplation, always pervaded and kept alive by eager work and service, which is our highest and most Christian hope of heaven? Heaven will not be pure stagnation, not idleness, not any mere luxurious dreaming over the spiritual repose that has been safely and for ever won, but active, tireless, earnest work, fresh, live enthusiasm for the high labours which eternity will offer. These vivid inspirations will play through our deep repose, and make it more mighty in the service of God than any feverish, unsatisfied toil of earth has ever been. The sea of glass will be mingled with fire.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 110.

Chap. xv., ver. 3.—"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints."

THE Song of the Triumphant Church.

Our text suggests two topics of discourse; for it gives what may be called a definition of the song which the triumphant Church sings, and it then furnishes the words of which that song is composed. We have, therefore, in the first place, to examine the language by which the song is described: "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"; we have then, in the second place, to consider the language employed: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints."

I. Now it admits of no dispute that when the song of the triumphant Church is called "the song of Moses the servant of God" the reference is to the Church of the Israelites and their leaders when Pharaoh and his hosts had been buried in the waters. And it is very observable, and in some respects almost mysterious, that it should be this "song of Moses" to which glorified saints still strike their harps. The song was not only of thanksgiving to the Lord, but exultation over the wicked, rejoicing in their destruction. The song of the triumphant Church is described not only as "the song of Moses," but as that also of "the Lamb." "They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb." Now we may be said to feel more at home with "the song of the Lamb" than with that of Moses, for this is a song of which even now we can strike some notes; whereas we look on that of Moses with a kind of awe and dread, as though it were not suited to such minstrelsy as ours. "The song of the Lamb," which the Evangelist heard, may be considered as that "new song" which is given in other parts of the book of Revelation, the burden of which is the "worthiness" of the Redeemer. The "thousand times ten thousand of thousands" which are "round about the throne" were heard by St. John saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." There is something similar to this in the strain which mingles with that of lofty exultation as the Church beholds her overthrown enemies. And if, therefore, "the song of Moses" be one which shows such subjugation or refinement

of human feeling as is almost unintelligible, at least "the song of the Lamb" is in thorough harmony with what is now felt and chanted by believers; it is the song of grateful confession that we owe everything to the Redeemer, and that His blood and righteousness have been the alone procuring cause of our deliverance from ruin and our title to immortality.

II. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints." Such is a portion of the lofty anthem. Taking this anthem in its largest application, we may say that it celebrates the greatness of the plan of God as displayed in the occurrences of the judgment-day. And it is well worthy our attention that these two characteristics should be finally declared to distinguish the whole business of the judgment. It will be "a great and marvellous work" when the "tares shall have been separated from the wheat," all unrighteousness detected and exposed, the wicked banished and the faithful exalted. And this is not the whole of the chorus. The Church affirms God's "ways" to be "just and true," as well as His "works great and marvellous"; and this is a most important assertion when considered as called forth by the transactions of the judgment. The judgment will include in its searchings and sentences the heathen world as well as the Christian—men who have had none but the scantiest portion of revelation and those who have been blessed with its fulness. And even in a Christian community there is the widest difference between the means and opportunities afforded to different men; some being only just within sound of the Gospel, whilst others are continually placed within sound of its messages. All this seems to invest with great difficulty the business of the judgment. It shows that there must be various standards: one standard for the heathen and another for the Christian; one for this heathen or this Christian and another for that. And there is something overwhelming in the thought that the untold millions of the human population will undergo an individual scrutiny; that they will come man by man to the bar of their Judge, each to be tried by his own privileges and powers. We can hardly put from us the feeling that in so enormous an assize there will be cases comparatively overlooked, in which due allowance will not be made, or in which sentence will not be founded on a full estimate of the circumstances. But whatever our doubts and suspicions beforehand, "just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints," is the confession, which will follow the judgment. It is

a confession, we are bound to say, in which the lost will join with the redeemed. The feeling of every condemned man shall be that, had there been none but himself to be tried, his case could not have received a more patient attention or a more equitable decision. The praise which is chanted on the glassy and fiery sea tells us that God will be justified when He speaketh, and clear when He judgeth.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1656.

REFERENCES: xv. 3. — Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 136; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 20; H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 186.

Chap. xv., vers. 3, 4.

THE Triumph of Goodness.

I. Moses is not to be regarded here exactly as a historic personage; certainly it is not the song which he composed that is meant, nor the song that was composed by the Lamb; but here is the theme: Moses and the Lamb. And what was Moses in this heavenly tableau, to the thoughts of those addressed but the beginning of a great Divine dispensation of mercy and of education? He, far back in the wilderness and in the beginnings and sources of history, organised truth, and beauty, and right, and set a-going those great services by which the soul was to be enriched and ennobled. In other words, he was the beginner. The song, beginning with Moses and ending with the Lamb, connected the very first dawn of Divine truth, in the earliest periods, with its first flow and all its mutations clear down to the time of Jesus Christ, who in Jerusalem was, and who now in the new Jerusalem is, typified as the Lamb. The figure to us is almost dead, but to the Jew, who had been accustomed to associate with the sacrificial lamb whatever was sweet, whatever was beautiful, whatever was pure and unworldly in perfection, the figure meant immensely more than it means to us.

II. The song was of triumph. It was the shout, the jubilatic outcry, of the universe, that stood around about the ends of things, looking back to the beginning and seeing the way of God down through the whole dispensation of time in the world, now fulfilled and brought to a triumphant close in the other life. All that there was in the different heroes, all that there was in the different dispensations, all the judgments, all the sufferings, all the reformations, all the growths, all the developments, all the victories, whatever had gone to make up

the moral elements in human history, in the household, and in matters touching priestly offices and prophetic qualities in those who witnessed in the wilderness, in prisons, and in the mountains, the apostolic administrations, and all the after-periods, and doubtless all that which has come down from the Apostles' day to ours; all these things constitute the theme of that great, heavenly, outbreaking song. And what is the result of it? It is simply the chanting of the old bard by which the deeds of his chief are narrated, as we narrate the achievements, enterprises, battles, and victories of an hero. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." Here, then, is the Divine catastrophe—evil gone under; imperfections swelled out to perfectness; ungrowth and crudeness brought up to ripeness and to beauty; goodness triumphant through the universal realm. All nations shall come to Thee, not one being left out.

III. This was the vision, not of time, but of the upper sphere; and it was this: the absolute triumph of the Divine part in man. They who have gone before, and for generations yet those that shall follow us, must see the flesh stronger than the spirit in the great mass of mankind. Time, looked at from any high standpoint, is a most sad and dreary experience, unless we have some outlet, unless we have some compensation somewhere. The might and power of past ages has been physical, passionate, sensuous, devilish; and although here and there there have been sprinklings of goodness, although here and there there have been a thousand sweet voices heard, yet in the main the chant of time has been hoarse, harsh, cacophonous. In the main the movement of the human race has been the movement of vast bodies with vast sufferings, and vast wastefulness, and vast uselessness. But they who stand disengaged from the ignorance and darkness of time, they who are lifted up, and are at a point of vision where they can see the past, the present, and the future—I behold them, not bearing witness to us, but in their own unconsciousness breaking out into ecstacies of gladness because God is justified. He who brought into existence this globe, with all its miserable populations, in the last estate shall stand and be glorified in the thought and feeling of those who behold the end as well as the beginning. "Thou only art holy." "All nations

shall come and worship before Thee." Why? "For Thy judgments are made manifest." There is charity; there is explanation; there is reconciliation; there is harmonisation; and in the end it shall appear, when we see from the beginning to the end of this tremendous, and as yet uninterrupted, riddle of life and time, with an unclouded eye and with a vision just, and true, and perfect—then it shall appear that God is lovely and beautiful.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 165.

Chap. xvi., ver. 17.—"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done."

SATANIC Influence.

I. We know it to have been a prevalent opinion among the Jews that fallen angels had their residence in the air, filling that region which extends between the earth and the firmament. We can hardly say whence the opinion was derived, nor on what sufficient reasons it can be supported. But when St. Paul calls the devil "the prince of the power of the air," he may be said to favour the opinion and almost to give it the sanction of his authority. It is, however, of little importance that we determine where fallen angels have their habitations; and perhaps the associating the devil with the air is not so much for the purpose of defining the residence of Satan as to give us information as to the nature of his dominion. We mean that probably we are not hereby taught that the devil dwells in the air—though that also may be the meaning—but rather that he has at his disposal the power of the air, so that he can employ this element in his operations on mankind. And we know of no reason why the power of the devil should be regarded as confined to what we are wont to call spiritual agency, so as never to be employed in the production of physical evil, why the souls, and not also the bodies, of men should be considered as objects of his attack. If we believe, as we do believe, that ever since his first success Satan has been unwearied in his endeavours to follow up his victory, as far as the soul is concerned, by instigating to sin, plying with temptations, and throwing obstacles in the way of piety, why should we not also believe that he has continued his assaults on the body, wasting it with sickness, racking it with pain, and thus making it a vast

encumbrance to the soul in her strivings after righteousness? Indeed, if it could even be supposed that, engaged in attempting the destruction of our immortal part, the devil would care nothing for our mortal, knowing it already doomed to death and therefore not worth his malice, yet, when you remembered how the mind may be acted on through the body, how difficult and almost impossible it is to turn the thoughts on solemn and deep inquiries where there is great suffering in the flesh, you would conclude it probable that the body as well as the soul would be assailed and harassed by Satan and his angels.

II. We are indeed well aware that it is not the devil who destroys man. It must be man who destroys himself. The devil can do nothing against us except as we afford him opportunity, yielding ourselves to his suggestions and allowing him to lead us captive at his will. But it may at length come to pass, if we persist in walking as children of disobedience, that we quite expel from our breast the Spirit of God, whose strivings have been resisted, and whose admonitions have been despised, and enthrone in his stead that spirit of evil whose longing and whose labour it is to make us share his own ruin. And then is there as clear a demoniacal possession as when the man was cast into the fire or water through the fearful energies of the indwelling fiend. Let us not too hastily conclude that there is nothing in our days at all analogous to those demoniacal possessions of which so frequent mention is made in the Gospel. When the Apostle speaks of the devil as "working in the children of disobedience," he uses the same word which is elsewhere used of the operations of the Holy Ghost, that Divine Agent who dwelleth in believers, residing in them as a permanent monitor, renewing their nature, and preparing them for glory. So that St. Paul ascribes to the devil, as acting in the children of disobedience, that very same energy which he ascribes to God's Spirit as acting in the disciples of Jesus. And whatever, therefore, the degree in which we consider good men as possessed by the Holy Ghost, in that very same degree must we consider abandoned and reprobate men as possessed by Satan and his angels. There must be as much of direct influence, as much of the surrender of the man to the dominion set up within himself, in the one case as in the other. In neither have we right to say that free agency is interfered with, much less destroyed; but in both there is the willing submission to the dictates of another, and that other so identified with the man himself that he is actually

bound by the being obeyed. There is, then, no doubt that the devil is an enemy to be dreaded and resisted; but we thank God for the assertion that there is to break a day on our creation when the malignant adversary shall be bound and spoiled of his power to assail.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1838.

REFERENCES: xviii. 2.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 99. xviii. 4.—G. Carlyle, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 168. xviii. 10.—F. W. Farrar, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxiii., p. 312. xix. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 262. xix. 3.—G. Calthrop, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 358.

Chap. xix., vers. 6-9.

THE Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

I. God's people are looked at in two ways. First, as forming a great body: the body of Christ, the Church. In this light the whole Church is the bride of the Lamb. Secondly, as a great multitude of separate believers, regarded now as guests at the great marriage supper of their Lord. Both parts of this sacred vision have their full counterpart in other portions of Scripture. On the one hand, we find many passages in which the whole Church together is spoken of as the bride of Christ, the Queen who is to reign by the King's side in heaven; on the other, there is no lack of passages which speak of the great marriage feast at which Christian people, now regarded one by one, are to sit down to meat in the kingdom of heaven, received to the marriage supper of the King, each in his own wedding garment of repentance and faith.

II. As the Church is represented, on the one hand, as being one, the bride of Christ, the wife of the Lamb, who hath made herself ready, so we must take great care to keep in the Church, to cling to the unity of the Church, lest we should have no part nor portion in the unspeakable blessedness of the bride of Christ. As, on the other hand, Christian people are represented as being received one by one to the marriage feast of the Lamb, so we must remember that, besides clinging to the Church of God and forming part of the oneness of the queenly bride of Christ, we must ourselves be fit guests for that heavenly feast, and live and die with that clean and white array, that wedding garment of repentance and faith, which alone can give us admission to it.

G. MOBERLY, *Brighstone Sermons*, p. 292.

Chap. xix., ver. 9.—"And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

I. A DISTINCTION seems to be drawn between "the marriage" and the "marriage supper" of the Lamb. "The marriage" takes place now; "the marriage supper" is to follow by-and-by. "The marriage" is that act of union between each soul and Christ when the soul, drawn by God's love and made willing by His grace, is linked to, and made one with, the mystical body of Christ; "the marriage supper" will be the public celebration and the glorious consummation of that union. Therefore there are differences. "The marriage" here, blessed and beautiful as it is, has its trouble and its separation. The soul has to leave, not without pain, what once was very dear to it. And some fear cannot help to mingle even where love prevails. But at the "marriage supper" it will be all union, and no parting; and there will be no room for the shadow of a fear there.

II. "The marriage" here is an individual act. One by one, each as God chooses, one here and another there, souls give themselves to Christ. "The marriage supper" will be the solemnity of the whole Church's collective partnership, one and another, with Jesus. "The marriage" here—at least, so it seems sometimes to the poor Christian's heart—is capable of being dissolved again; but when the "marriage supper" comes, who will ever think of breaking the tie? In "the marriage" here, real and perfect though it be, there are intervals of distance, seasons when there is no union between the soul and Him it loves; but in the "marriage supper" the felt and visible presence of Christ will be for ever and for ever. In "the marriage" here there were many who, though truly and indissolubly joined to Christ, yet often seemed to others and seemed to themselves not to be His. The world did not acknowledge them; the Church did not acknowledge them; they did not acknowledge their own selves. But at "the marriage supper" there will be no misunderstandings. Christ will have proclaimed His own, and the whole universe will confess Him and His saints.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 289.

Chap. xix., ver. 10.—"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

CHRIST the Theme of Prophecy.

I. The words of our text were addressed by an angel to the Evangelist John. They are very large and general; there is

no exception made. Whatever the subject matter of prediction, the text claims it as a witness for Him; whosoever the prophet, he is to be reckoned amongst those who bore testimony to Jesus. The words may, indeed, with equal fairness, be inverted, and their meaning will be still more apparent: "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." According to this reading, prophecy, however variable and whatever its immediate topic, has but one object: that of giving testimony to Christ. Thus also St. Peter, in his address to Cornelius, says of the Redeemer, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him should receive remission of sins." And yet undoubtedly there are many predictions of the Bible in which we cannot profess to find a strict testimony to Christ; and if we were referred to each prophet to find an express prediction accomplished in Christ, we should probably be somewhat at a loss. The writings, for example, of Nahum and Zephaniah seem to contain nothing that amounts to a distinct prophecy of the Messiah. There are undoubtedly allusions to the times of the Gospel, but there is no prophetic declaration of which we are bound to say that it expressly belongs to the person and work of the Mediator. And yet it is evident from our text that something may be drawn from these prophets, as well as from Isaiah, who sketches with such wonderful accuracy whatever should befall the Messiah. Let us see, then, how this is to be met. Let us take in our hands the prophets of the Old Testament, and let us examine whether in one way or another they do not give such testimony to Jesus as would bear out the assertion, "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." If prophecy contributed to the introducing and upholding of a dispensation which rendered the Jews the great heralds to the world of a Deliverer to be born in the fulness of time, there can be nothing clearer than that, in delineating national prophecies, the prophets performed the part of witnesses for Christ, so that, whether they spoke of what should come to pass in Jerusalem or poured forth their strains in descriptions of the victories and defeats of heathen nations, they were effecting the mighty result that a whole people through many generations should stand out as a harbinger of the Redeemer of man, and therefore were they furnishing by their every announcement the material for verifying the assertion of our text: "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." The immediate theme of prophecy may, indeed, be the siege of a city or the overthrow of a state; but to ourselves, at least, who are privileged with the whole of

revelation, it is evident that the besieged city or the overthrown state represents yet mightier conquests and more stupendous victories. In the ruins of Babylon we are taught to behold the defeat of antichrist; so that as ancient prophets pass through the lands which were inhabited by the enemies of Israel, and announce the vengeance by which they should be speedily overthrown, we hearken to strains which tell of deliverances to be vouchsafed to Christ's people and effected by Christ's interference. What then? Centuries may have gone by since the prophets swept the chords to the story of battle and of conquest. The notes of their strains may have told of nothing to the listeners in Jerusalem but the march and defeat of some monarch at whose power they trembled; but we hear in their every effusion the resistless advance of the Lord our Redeemer, and knowing that it is the Captain of our salvation appearing at the last as the Deliverer of His Church whom they hail as "coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah," we give in our assent to the accuracy of the description, "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus."

II. The true idea of prophecy—an idea which should be kept steadily in view whilst you peruse the predictions of Scripture—is derivable from this truth: "that in all the prophets" Christ found the things concerning Himself. Men are apt to assume as the sole purpose of a prophecy the giving men notice of some coming event. They do not look to any ulterior purpose, and they are therefore surprised if the prophecy seem obscure when the event has occurred, or if the correspondence between the two be not every way accurate; and certainly the predictions of Scripture will not always answer to the tests which men think it fair to impose. Many of these prophecies remain mysterious, though we know their accomplishment; and the events to which others are referred are scarcely commensurate with the terms in which they are announced. But all this is to be explained by the fact that "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." If it had been the business of a prophet simply to tell men beforehand the issue of a siege or a battle, it might have been expected, and we should probably have found, that all obscurity in description would have been removed by the occurrence, and that the two would have corresponded in every particular; but if, on the other hand, it be the object of prophecy to tell men indeed beforehand of the siege or the battle, but so to shape the prediction that it shall also bear witness for Christ, you may fairly expect that, whilst

the historical event is sufficiently indicated, much will be introduced which arises solely from the ulterior testimony. Indeed, there is much to excite our admiration when we study the events predicted, and compare them with events in which they find their fulfilment. To be able, as we are in a variety of instances, to read the fortunes of nations in both prophecy and history—this supplies Christianity with a standing miracle, and places us on as fine a vantage ground in our combats with infidelity as though we could appeal to wonder-working power yet possessed in the Church.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2687.

Chap. xix., ver. 11.—"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war."

FIGHTING for God.

I. If we are to contend earnestly with evil, we must ourselves hate it. To hate evil is not so easy as it once was. As people become civilised, and lives become comfortable, evil is cunning enough to veil its ugliest features, and to call in the aid of many powerful allies, such as good-nature, common-sense, charity, and even philosophy, to say a word on its behalf. Between them they contrive to produce a very lenient portrait of evil, and to represent it as an amiable weakness, or an irresistible temptation, or a conventional slip, or even an imperfect and undeveloped good. And the more we look on such kindly but really godless caricatures of evil, the harder it becomes for us to hate it. St. Paul's words seem exaggerated, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

II. Note two of the main difficulties which are likely to damp our courage and make us only half-hearted in our contest with evil. There are, of course, many such, but I shall select only two. (1) We have read of that legendary "Knight of God," into whose lips the poet has put the noble words,

> "My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure."

Alas! the sad reason why our strength is often little better than a coward's is because our heart is not pure. (2) The second obstacle is this: the fancy that we stand almost alone in our desire for a better state of things, and that the mass of those around us are either indifferent or hostile. Thus the enterprise will seem hopeless. Remember, God does not

b'd you succeed; He only bids you try. And all history tells us that all the best things that have ever been done in the way of moral reforms have been done by minorities, strength made perfect in weakness, the faith of a few triumphing over the stagnation or the opposition of numbers. This is the device, written in letters of gold, oftentimes in letters of blood, over the front of all great causes. "God loves," it has been said, "to build upon nothing."

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 266.

REFERENCES: xix. 11-16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1452; C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 202. xix. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 281; R. W. Dale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 353.

Chap. xix., ver. 16.—**"And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."**

CHRIST the Universal Sovereign.

I. The title of the text testifies to Christ's permanent kingly qualities. The true king is not merely the man who reigns, but whose qualities mark him out for dominion. He is, as the title itself indicates, the best regulator, or, as we say in our Saxon speech, the man who *can*, the capable man, the man who can command, not merely because he can command the brute force which compels the weak to submit, but the wise and good qualities which make it a privilege to obey him, and who shows men what is fitting and best for them to do. Christ is the world's ideal King, the object of all its longings, whether they have been related in story or uttered in song. Its fabulous heroes or the true kings whom it has honoured most, almost deifying some of them, because of the good which they have conferred on their people, whether or not they existed as they are seen through the haze with which distance and romance have surrounded them—these men, so far as they were good, are but darkened and shadowy types of the all-perfect one. He combines in Himself all that was kingly in them, while He is exempt from all the imperfections by which their kingly character was marred.

II. Then, again, the passage asserts His control over the mightiest and most exalted of men, for although His dominion is not so extensive as it is destined to become, and the title He bears has not as yet attained to its fullest significance, it is, nevertheless, true that even now He exercises control over the

kings of the earth. Whether or not they recognise His authority, they are still under His dominion.

III. This title foretells His universal dominion, and in so doing it does but chime with other Scriptures, which, however much they differ as to the means by which such a desirable consummation is to be accomplished, are one in the belief that the same Lord who governs in nature and in providence is yet to extend His dominion and be the acknowledged King over all the earth.

W. LANDELS, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 313.

REFERENCES: xx. 1-3.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 162. xx. 4-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 391. xx. 11, 12.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 70.

Chap. xx., vers. 11-15.

"AND the Books were Opened."

What are the books to be read? We are not told their title, but I think we may make some conjecture.

I. The first book will be the book of the law of God. Just as in our courts of justice the laws of the realm are always near at hand, that in any doubtful case they may be appealed to, so, I think, the first book will be the book of the revealed will of the holy and just God, a record of the laws and measures by which men will be tried.

II. The next book will be the book of the Gospel. Side by side with the volume of the law will stand the volume of God's love contained in the Gospel, the wondrous record of all that is done by God for man.

III. The third book will be the book of the dealings of God's Holy Spirit with the fallen family of man. Some of us may have already lost sight of the striving of the Holy Spirit with us; but God does not forget it: God does not lose sight of it.

IV. The book of God's providence will be opened. In it is kept, without any possibility of mistake, a record of all God's dealings with us externally. God is ever seeking by His providential dealings to bring us to Him.

V. The book of our life will be opened. Every one of us is writing a book; we are every one of us authors, although we may never have written a book, not even a line, in our lives. Though we may never have dreamt of printing a book, yet we are dictating to the recording angel the whole of our life from moment to moment, from hour to hour.

VI. The book of life. Jesus Christ is the Author of it. From beginning to end it is His. From the first page to the end, it is life all through: life as it first entered the soul; life as it grew and was fed and nourished and sustained, and the glorious results of life, the glorious harvest reaped by the soul; life which triumphs over our dead selves, which brings the dry bones together out of the gloomy sepulchre—the book of life, written by the Lord of life, Jesus Christ Himself.

W. Hay Aitken, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 881.

Chap. xx., ver. 12.—"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

Standing before God.

I. What is meant by standing before God? We are apt to picture to ourselves a great dramatic scene, host beyond host, rank behind rank, the millions who have lived upon the earth, all standing crowded together in the indescribable presence of One who looks not merely at the mass, but at the individual, and sees through the whole life and character of every single soul. The picture is sublime, and it is what the words of St. John are intended to suggest. But we must get behind the picture to its meaning. The picture must describe not one scene only, but the whole nature and condition of the everlasting life. The souls of men in the eternal world are always "standing before God." And what does that mean? We understand at once if we consider that that before which a man stands is the standard, or test, or source of judgment for his life. Every soul that counts itself capable of judgment and responsibility stands in some presence by which the nature of its judgment is decreed. The higher the presence, the loftier and greater, though often the more oppressed and anxious, is the life. A weak man, who wants to shirk the seriousness and anxiety of life, goes down into some lower chamber and stands before some baser judge, whose standard will be less exacting. A strong, ambitious man presses up from judgment-room to judgment-room, and is not satisfied with meeting any standard perfectly so long as there is any higher standard which he has not faced.

II. The dead, small and great, St. John says that he saw standing before God. In that great judgment-day another truth is that the difference of sizes among human lives, of which we make so much, passes away, and all human beings, in simple virtue of their human quality, are called to face the

everlasting righteousness. The child and the greybeard, the scholar and the boor, however their lives may have been separated here, they come together there. It is upon the moral ground that the most separated souls must always meet. All may be good: all may be bad; therefore before Him whose nature is the decisive touchstone of goodness and badness in every nature which is laid before it all souls of all the generations of mankind may be assembled. The only place where all can meet, and every soul claim its relationship with every other soul, is before the throne of God. The Father's presence alone furnishes the meeting-place for all the children, regardless of differences of age or wisdom.

III. Another thought which is suggested by St. John's verse is the easy comprehension of the finite by the infinite. All the dead of all the generations stand before God together. But there is no finite, however vast, that can overcrowd the infinite, none that the infinite cannot most easily grasp and hold. St. John says that he saw all the hosts of the dead stand before God. We, too, must see them stand before God, and they will not oppress us. Be sure that if you will begin, not by counting the multitude of the dead and asking yourself how any celestial meadow where you can picture them assembled can hold them all, but by lifting yourself up and laying hold on the infinity of God, you will find range enough in Him for all the marvellous conception of the immortality of all men. Every thought of man depends on what you first think of God.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 60.

Chap. xx., ver. 12.—"The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

THE Secret Justice of Temporal Providence.

I. The great characteristic of future judgment is that it is open judgment: it declares itself. It does not leave the subject of punishment uncertain, so that a man does not know what he is punished for. All is open and plain dealing. We are told the reason of everything. We naturally connect a future judgment with a revelation of sin. It would seem to be a kind of Magna Charta of the next world that nothing shall be done without making known the grounds on which it is done. It is a transparent world; justice is a public justice, and proclaims its sentence upon the housetops. The whole congregation of God's creatures is made a witness to it, confirms and ratifies

the great work of Divine reward and punishment, and stamps the impress of conscience upon it.

II. But, with respect to the justice of this world as conducted under God's providence, we must make very large deductions from this openness. Whatever may be said about the merit of it, and how much good it does, one thing is to be observed: it is not an open justice, like that in the courts of heaven; its characteristic is rather closeness. A great deal is done, and carefully done, by it in the world, and it may be said to achieve many most important ends here, and ends which the Divine government has in view, but it does not declare itself; it punishes largely, and says nothing. You cannot trace the links by which the disadvantages under which you suffer are connected with your faults; but the connection may be closer than you are aware. You complain that there is a falling short from what might have been expected. You struggle on, but there is an absence of advantages. The sun does not shine upon you. It is so, but how do you know to what extent you may yourself have cut off the sunshine?

III. We do not know what this or that particular penalty has been due to, this or that unkind, or ungracious, or selfish act, but we do know generally the kind of faults we are prone to and the risk we run through them. We know, or may know perfectly well if we please, that these evil habits or qualities tend to alienate good men from us. We must be always on our guard, and, so far as this world is governed upon moral principles and upon principles of justice, we must walk in caution and in fear.

IV. The invisible court of our fellow-creatures, which sits behind men's backs, and issues negative punishments, is a true part of providential justice. The will of society upon its members is executed, and that will embodies much which is just and in the true interests of the community. But when we compare the inevitable meanness of the justice of the world and of society, its privacy, its cunning, its closeness, and those tendencies to a low type which are a part of the very system of things—when we compare these with the open court of heaven, the scene to which we turn rises before us as one full of majesty. Here we live amid the privacies and secret management of earthly justice; there we see the type and ideal of justice, for there God is Judge Himself.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 337.

Chap. xx., ver. 12.—"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

THE Last Assize.

Consider—

I. He who is to decide our portion for eternity is the very Being who died as our Surety. Who but man can fully sympathise with man? And yet if an angel be not qualified to sit in judgment, how can a man be? A man may have the power of sympathy, which an angel has not; but then he is far inferior to the angels in those other properties which are required, and in some of those properties even angels are altogether deficient. So that, if we would determine who alone seems fitted to bear the office of judge of this creation, we appear to require the insupposable combination—insupposable, we mean, so long as you shut us out from the Gospel—the omniscience of the Deity and the feelings of humanity. We cannot dispense with the omniscience of Deity; we see clearly enough that no finite intelligence can be adequate to that decision which will ensure the thorough justice of future retribution. But then neither can we dispense with the feelings of humanity; at least, we can have no confidence in approaching His tribunal, if we are sure that the difference in nature incapacitates Him from sympathy with those whose sentence He is about to pronounce, and precludes the possibility of His so making our case His own, as to allow of His deciding with due allowance for our feebleness and temptations. And here revelation comes in, and sets before us a Judge in whose person is centred that amazing combination which we have just pronounced as insupposable. This Man, by whom God hath ordained that "He will judge the world in righteousness," is Himself Divine, "the Word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God." He shall come in human form, "and every eye shall see Him," "bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh"; and they who pierced Him shall look upon Him, and recognise through all His majesty the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." It is thus we are assured that mercy and justice will alike have full scope in the transactions of the judgment, and that in appointing that the Mediator who died as our Substitute will preside at our trial God hath equally provided that every decision shall be impartial, and yet every man be dealt with as brother to Him who must determine our

fate. It is one of the most beautiful of the arrangements of redemption that the offices of Redeemer and Judge meet in the same Person, and that Person Divine. We call it a beautiful arrangement, as securing towards us tenderness as well as equity, the sympathy of a Friend as well as the disinterestedness of a righteous Arbiter. Had the Judge been only man, the imperfection of His nature would have led us to expect much of error in His verdicts; had He been only God, the distance between Him and ourselves would have made us fear that in determining our lots He would not have taken into account our feebleness and trials.

II. Note the thorough righteousness of the whole procedure of the judgment: "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Though no man can be saved by his works, every man shall be judged according to his works. If he have believed on Christ (and this is the single appointed mode of salvation), the sincerity of his faith will be proved by his works; and therefore, in being awarded everlasting life, he will be "judged according to his works." If he have not relied on the merits of his Saviour, the want of faith will be evidenced by the deficiency of his works; and therefore will he also as to everlasting misery be judged according to his works. And over and above this general decision, "according to his works," we believe that every particular of conduct will have something corresponding to it in the final retribution. Indeed, the brief description that the judgment will be "in righteousness" comprehends all that can well be advanced on this topic—righteousness, so that nothing shall escape the Judge, and nothing impose on the Judge, and nothing embarrass the Judge. If found in Christ, there is no adversary that can accuse us, if not members of the Mediator, no power that can absolve.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2032.

REFERENCE: XX. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 97.

Chap. xxi., ver. 1.—"And there was no more sea."

WITH this verse begins the closing passage of the book of God: the revelation of the things beyond the end. Now the veil lifts for the last time, and we behold the new universe. He who in the beginning created the heaven and the earth now reveals to the gaze of faith His second and final world. It

would be idle to say that there cannot be a literal meaning to our text. Assuredly it may please the Creator to order His new universe so that there shall be there scenes which answer to our earth and no scenes which answer to our sea. But it is plain that the main purpose of the phrase is spiritual. We are to put before us as we read not so much a state in which we shall never look out on a waste of tossing waters, as a state in which the sea of the soul shall be for ever gone.

I. We read here that all tumultuous agitations and vehement changes shall be over there. Again and again in Scripture we find the sea made the picture of human agitation. In the new universe this sea shall be no more. Its waves shall be silent at last and for ever; none of the sinful agitations, none of the upswelling passions, whether of persons or of nations, shall break in through the endless duration of the new universe upon that perfect life and perfect rest of holiness and joy.

II. We read here that there shall be no more separation. In the days when God caused the Bible to be written even more than now, the sea was a separating thing. Every year in those old days, before the mariner's compass had made new paths on the deep, well nigh from Michaelmas to Easter, the sea, in the Roman term, was "shut." The fierce, dreadful waters were scarce traversed by a single sail. Land from land, friend from friend, was barred those long months by the severing sea. Here at best heart to heart is like isle to isle, with deep waters between, even when these waters are oftenest crossed; there heart to heart will make, as it were, one bright, beautiful, continuous continent of sympathy and mutual joy, together for ever with the Lord.

H. C. G. Moule, *Fordington Sermons*, p. 107.

I. Let us consider this great and blessed promise as the revelation of a future in which there shall be no more painful mystery. We look out upon the broad ocean, and far away it seems to blend with air and sky. Mists come up over its surface. Suddenly there rises on the verge of the horizon a white sail, that was not there a moment ago; and we wonder, as we look out from our hills, what may be beyond those mysterious waters. And to these ancient peoples there were mysteries which we do not feel. What should we see if depth and distance were annihilated, and we beheld what there is out yonder and what there is down there? And is not our life ringed round in like manner with mystery? Surely to some this ought to come

as not the least noble and precious of the thoughts of what that future life is, "There shall be no more sea," and the mysteries which come from God's merciful limitation of our vision and some of the mysteries that come from God's wise and providential interposition of obstacles to our sight will have passed away.

II. The text tells us of a state that is to come when there is no more rebellious power. In the Old Testament the floods are often compared with the rage of the peoples and the rebellion of man against the will of God. Our text is a blessed promise that, in that holy state to which the apocalyptic vision carries our longing hopes, there shall be the cessation of all strife against our best Friend,.of all reluctance to wear His yoke whose yoke brings rest to the soul. The opposition that lies in all our hearts shall one day be subdued.

III. The text foretells a state of things in which there will be no more disquiet and unrest. Life is a voyage over a turbulent sea; changing circumstances come rolling after each other, like the indistinguishable billows of the great ocean. On the heavenly shore stands Christ, and there is rest there. There is no more sea, but unbroken rest, unchanging blessedness, perpetual stability of joy and love in the Father's house.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 325.

REFERENCES: xxi. 1.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 98; vol. xii., p. 77; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, No. 15; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 356; R. A. Bertram, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii, p. 136; *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 332; P. W. Darton, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 73. xxi. 2.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 179; J. B. French, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 195. xxi. 3.—H. P. Liddon, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Chap. xxi., ver. 4.—"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

GOD wiping away all Tears.

The subject teaches—

I. A lesson of resignation.

II. A lesson of gratitude. The same hand which chastises will one day wipe away our tears. It will not be long that we must wait before the faithfulness of God's word will be established.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 443.

REFERENCES: xxi. 4.—G. Calthrop, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 97; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 325.

Chap. xxi., ver. 5.—"Behold, I make all things new"; with Acts xvii., ver. 21: "All the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

THE Idolatry of Novelty.

The one text exhibits to us in a lively picture the working of a great idolatry; the other text shows us the abolition of that idolatry by the satisfaction of the want of which it is the expression. Together they present to us the two sides of our subject, which is the idolatry of novelty. It cannot be denied that there is in all lives, probably not least in the busiest and the loftiest, an element of dulness. This is only to say that there must be routine in every life which is either active or useful; and that the life which is neither active nor useful is sure to have a routine of its own, a monotony of mere indolence or mere self-indulgence, of all monotonies the most irksome and the most fatiguing.

I. The Athenians were not mere gossips or newsmongers. The first sound of the words does them some injustice. Their idolatry of novelty by no means exhausted itself in inventing, or embellishing, or retailing scandalous or mischievous stories against the great men of their city, or against humbler neighbours "dwelling securely by them." Their treatment of St. Paul shows this. He was not a man of sufficient notoriety or sufficient importance to attract the attention of the mere tattler or scandalmonger. It was because he raised grave questions, going to the very root of the national and individual life, that these idolaters of novelty were attracted by him, and thought it worth while to bring him before the religious tribunal of the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine which is talked by thee is?"—"this new doctrine," because, as St. Luke adds in the text, their great interest was in the hearing and telling of "anything at all new."

II. Those Athenians might well have an open ear for the preacher of a new divinity. This was but to confess, what was no secret by this time, that their anonymous altar was still standing, and that they waited to worship till it had a name. For them the idolatry of novelty was their hope and their religion. After all these centuries, we too are left with an anonymous altar, and the worship of English hearts is offered once again at the shrine of an unknown, an avowably unknowable, God. There is not an arrival of a so-called new apostle, there is not an importation of a so-called new divinity, for

which this modern Athens has not at least one of its ears open. We are told that some one has dared to say, within the Christian Church of London, that Buddha himself is second only (if second) to Jesus Christ in morals, and superior to Christ Himself in this: that he never claimed for himself Divinity.

III. The very feeling, the very want, the very sense of monotony which has made impatient man set up this paltry idol of novelty, is provided for by God Himself saying, "Behold, I make" (not a few things, but) "all things new." There are two ways of fulfilling the promise of renovation. One is by the renewal of the thing itself; the other is by the renewal of the eye that views it. If the one is the promise of the text, the other is the promise elsewhere alike of St. John and St. Paul. We have all known in ourselves how the same object—sea, sky, cloud, landscape, home itself and its inmates, the loved face, the letter from the dearest one—may look dull or look lively, look beautiful or look ugly, according to the state of the mind that views it. It looks quite different when a sin is strong in us from that which it looked when we had just risen from prayer, and the very skin of the face shone from the reflection of the King in His beauty.

> "Dark and cheerless is the morn
> Unaccompanied by Thee;
> Cheerless is the day's return
> Till Thy mercy's beams I see"—

then all is altered. Then the old commandment looks new. Then the heaven and the earth are new for me. Then He that sitteth upon the throne hath said, "Behold, I make all things new"—yea (as St. Paul interprets), the old things themselves.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Restful Thoughts for Restless Times*, p. 272.

ALL Things New.

I. Consider what Holy Scripture teaches us as to our resurrection life. Let us try to learn something as to the state and place in which we hope to find ourselves hereafter. We are expressly told that there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. Our home, our bright, blessed, glorious home, is not to be in a world of sin and sorrow, not in a world which groans under the curse of God, but it will be a new home, nothing like what we see now, something quite different, something quite fresh, something altogether new: a new heaven and a new earth. "The former things"—death, sorrow,

sickness, sin, temptation, misery, wretchedness; all that makes life a burden to us; all that troubles us and vexes us; all that saddens us and grieves us in this lower existence—all will have gone for ever; "the former things are passed away."

II. Not only is the place to be new, but those that inhabit the place must be new also. If no sin can enter there, if no sickness, no weariness, no weakness, if none of these things can enter that new Jerusalem, then certainly we must be new—new in body and new in soul. And so it will be: we shall be changed; we shall live under new conditions of existence. Mortality will give place to immortality. This corruptible frame of ours shall become incorruptible.

III. But our text tells us how this is to be. It explains how all this is to be accomplished: "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." All this must be God's work, God's work in our hearts. The work is a gradual work: it has its beginning, and its middle, and its end. The work will be finished in heaven, but it must begin here on earth. Here it is imperfect and incomplete; here it is a painful work, a work of toil and difficulty. In heaven it shall be finished, quite perfect, quite complete; for we shall be like Him, like Him for ever.

E. V. HALL, *The Waiting Saviour*, p. 103.

A NEW Creation.

A religion which professes to claim the attention and the allegiance of man must show itself to be a religion fitted for man. It must be capable of satisfying his legitimate and innocent instincts. It is perfectly true that the very idea of a religion is this: that it is to repress man's vices and to educate within him holier desires; but it is also true that if religion appears at all, it must appear capable of satisfying his legitimate and his innocent instincts. And one of the features of the Christian faith is pre-eminently this. It is not merely one which sets itself in utter and irreconcilable antagonism to all that savours of sin or of vice in man, but it does not seek to distort human nature; it does not seek to turn man from what is natural to him. It is not merely antagonistic to evil, but it is also capable of developing good, because it comes to man, and dealing with man as he is, it proclaims to him the duty of an entire self-control.

I. There are several instincts which, as intimated in the text, the Christian religion will satisfy. What are these instincts?

It has been often said that we are creatures of the present; that is, that our life is bounded by that little moment which we call "now." The past—that has slipped from our grasp; the future—it is not yet ours; and all of that which we can call life, which is really in our possession, is simply the present moment of time. This is perfectly true if by it we understand that our opportunities are limited to the present; but it is utterly untrue if it means that man can be for ever isolated from the past, or ever removed in anticipation from the future. We are bound to the past by the law of reminiscence; we are bound to the future by the law of hope. Though memory may be stronger in age, and hope may be stronger in youth, yet the two instincts of hope and memory walk side by side with us from the very cradle to the grave; and no religion which is worthy of the name can dare to come before man unless it satisfies these two instincts. The religion of the Master satisfies both. The words of the text seem to incorporate that which will satisfy both our longing after the past and our glorious anticipation of the future, when One who, sitting upon the throne of the universe, cries out to men who are sinking under the agony of despair as they find things withering at their touch, "Behold, I make all things new." It satisfies the instinct of hope.

II. But is this all? There is the other instinct. It is the love of the things old. It is that which memory so constantly pleads for; and do the words which seem to speak of newness satisfy that also? Christ does not say, "Behold, I make all things utterly unlike what they are; I make you a new heaven and a new earth." He surely never means that He does violence to the instinct which makes us cling to the things old. He means that He will put back the freshness of youth without robbing us of the love of memory; He means that He will give us back the suppleness and the power of the old early days, but He will not rob us of that which is dear and familiar to us. One of the grandest things in the whole of this book of Revelation is the way in which it preserves, so to speak, the contact of Christian minds with the past.

BISHOP BOYD-CARPENTER, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 1037.

REFERENCES: xxi. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol xxxi., No. 1816; G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 168. xxi. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1549; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 107; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 50; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 113; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 353.

Chap. xxi., vers. 6-8.

THIS chapter speaks of the winding up of God's dealings with the world, and of the final outcome of that process of trial and discipline which has been going on throughout the long ages of human history.

Consider—

I. The promise: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Those who long for the knowledge of God and for the enjoyment of God, those who consider God the highest good, to be obtained at all risks and at any cost, will be of necessity involved in a contest with the forces of this world. Their longing makes them warriors; their determination to find their way into their proper spiritual element, which is God, compels them to encounter and to overcome the intervening obstacles which lie between them and the object of their desire. Self wishes to be lord, and forbids Christ to be Lord. We have to resist self. We have conflict, too, with the outer world, with the society in which we move; conflict with the devil, with many a misgiving about God, with many a perverted thought about the Gospel, with many a dark surmising, all of which have their origination with the father of lies.

II. But it is not enough to be engaged in this conflict: we must be victorious in it. The promises are to him that overcomes. We must not fight and be beaten; we must fight and overcome. Our thirsting for God must make God everything to us. To serve Him, to please Him, to be like Him, must be our paramount desire, overriding every other feeling and carrying us triumphantly through all the opposition that stands in the way. It is something to find at last, when all is over, when the life-task is completed, that we have achieved a success. Such is the statement of the passage. We have not missed our aim; we have not made a great miscalculation. There is a result, and a great and magnificent one, to the course upon which we have entered. We have aimed at the possession of God, and have gained it. "I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

III. We pass on now to consider the opposite side of the picture. Look at those who lead the van of this black company. In the forefront we notice persons whom perhaps we should not have expected to find there: the "fearful" and the "unbelieving." The saved are the men of courage. They have feared nothing but God, and displeasing God. The fearful are the moral cowards, who have shrunk from what is displeasing to flesh and blood, and who have not been willing to take up the cross to

follow Christ. The one class were athirst for God; they longed for God, for the possession and enjoyment of God, and this strong, irrepressible longing led them into conflict with the forces of evil, and in the end brought them triumphantly through. But the others cared nothing about the possession of God. The world, in some shape or other, was what they really were anxious to secure, and so they had no more strength to sustain them in the controversy with evil; and hence, instead of overcoming, they were overcome: instead of being courageous on the side of God, they were fearful, and fell under the power of evil. And notice into what fearful companionship their moral cowardice has brought them. They are linked with the bloodthirsty, and unclean, and impure, and false, and cast with them into the pool which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 987.

REFERENCE: xxi. 7. — P. Brooks, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 1.

Chap. xxi., vers. 10, 11.

THE Heavenly Jerusalem.

There is no subject dearer to the Christian heart than that of the heavenly city, the city of Christian poetry and of Christian hope. Let us take up two or three points in the inspired description of the city in this chapter, and consider what they really mean.

I. Consider what is said in the thirteenth verse: "on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates"—twelve gates, that is to say, and three on each side. Of course this is not to be understood literally, because walls and gates are to keep the enemy out and to keep the citizens in; but who can suppose that there will be any need either of defences or of restraints in the heavenly city? What do these twelve gates mean, then, three on each side? What, save that the city lieth open and accessible to all quarters, and to all quarters alike? Therefore take courage, O traveller Zionwards; if only thy face be set towards the holy city, thou too shalt surely find a gate open to admit thee, from whatever direction thou shalt come.

II. Consider what is written about the city in the sixteenth verse: that it lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth; the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. If anything were needed to show us that these descrip-

tions are not to be literally understood, but are purely spiritual, this single sentence would be enough. The city of the vision lieth as a solid cube, which is manifestly impossible. Yet the signification of this parable is as plain as it is blessed; what does it mean save the perfect and complete proportions of heavenly happiness and glory? How great and striking is the contrast between this and any human happiness, any earthly good, so unequal, so incomplete, as that always is.

III. Consider how it is written in the eighteenth verse that "the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." We shall remember at once that no gold on earth is like this, for it is one of the qualities of gold to be opaque, however thin it may be beaten out; even gold-leaf is not transparent; the beauties of pure gold and of clear glass are never combined in this world. Nor if they were would the result be at all desirable for building purposes. But what does this universal transparency signify in heaven save that there will be nothing to hide, nothing to keep secret, but that all will be open to all, because nothing will be shameful and nothing selfish? The city was of pure gold, precious, costly, thrice refined, of pure gold like clear glass, open, transparent, unconcealing. What a marvel is this to think upon as we look forward to that pure glory! What mysteries of joy and hope lie hid for us beneath the seemingly fantastic imagery of the Scriptures!

R. WINTERBOTHAM, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 352.

REFERENCE: xxi. 10-21.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 119.

Chap. xxi., vers. 10-23.

WE feel instinctively the beauty and the grandeur of this passage descriptive of the Church of Christ when she shall have passed through the successive stages of her earthly warfare and shall once more have her Lord reigning peaceably and triumphantly in her midst, all enemies subdued, all hindrances surmounted, all stains cleansed and purged away. For it is the purpose of her great Head, as St. Paul witnesses in his epistle to the Ephesians, to make His Church a glorious Church and to present her to His Father without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she shall be holy and without blemish. God Almighty, though distributing His gifts and ordering His providence at sundry times and in divers manners, has yet had one unchanging purpose from beginning to end. The patriarchal dispensation was preparatory to the Mosaic, the Mosaic to the Christian, and the Christian to that yet fuller development

of the wealth of God's loving-kindness when redeemed humanity—all redeemed, even though they know it not, by the one and self-same precious blood—shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

I. There are two main ideas that seem to me to stand out amidst all this figurative language, and with these two I propose mainly, if not exclusively, to deal. They are the idea of brightness and the idea of proportion. The city was full of light, not the light of the sun, nor the moon, nor of candles, nor any artificial illumination; the Lord God was its light. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." Christ is the Light of the world. He came to scatter away the clouds of darkness; He came to make the whole body of the individual man and the whole body of the Church full of light, and in no part dark. Where the power of Christ's Gospel has penetrated, there, in the fullest and broadest sense of the term, should be light. And light implies joyousness and brightness. And so we must remember we have to preach a "Gospel," not a gloomy message. The great feature of Christianity is hope. Heathen religions fostered despair. Any one who has read the poems of Lucretius knows the sad tone that runs through them; and even the brighter-eyed Virgil would say, "We see all things rushing backward by a sort of inevitable destiny." The Romans thought society was wretched because the world's prospects were so dark before them, but not so with us who live in the sunshine of the Gospel. No doubt there is, and must be, an element of sadness in our worship when we think how unworthy we are of the manifold mercies which God our Father has so bountifully provided for us; and yet even when we think of our unworthiness there will be an overmastering element of confidence and even of joy.

II. And now to pass on to the other thought: the thought of proportion. The whole of this great city was of a certain proportion. It was all measured out with a measuring rod, and every part fitted to the other; and the length, and the breadth, and the height of it were equal. You will notice that this one idea of proportion runs through the visions both of Ezekiel and John. And so in the spiritual Church of Christ, to which you and I belong, and of whose glories these visions were but faint images; proportion is the great law of Christ's gospel, both in its dogmatic and its practical aspects. If any

man prophesy, says Paul, let him prophesy according to the proportion, the analogy, of faith. I have heard it said of Dr. Chalmers that it was one of his rules to a young minister that he should unfold the whole plan of salvation in every sermon, and his reason for it was this: that it might happen that in the congregation there was one man who had never heard that whole plan before, and might not again, and, therefore, for his sake the whole plan was to be unfolded. I do not know whether he who gave the precept acted upon it; but if most of us were to do so, we should very soon empty our churches. St. Paul wisely drew the distinction between milk for babes and strong meat for men.

BISHOP FRASER, *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 65.

Chap. xxi., ver. 13.—"On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates."

THE Gates of the Church.

I. The Church stands in a very definite and imperative relation to the Churches and the whole community about it. There can be no more thorough reversal of the idea of the Church than that its life, and work, and relations are within itself. It is indeed right that a Church should be well knit together, a body fitly joined and compacted, every part working effectually, increasing its body, and edifying itself in love. It has a life of its own, a work within itself, a growth from within to secure, a witness to bear by its own harmonious and righteous order. But when this is done, the Church is simply on the threshold of its larger duties and relations; it has so far only made itself effective for that distinctively Christian work that belongs to it. For of all institutions in the world the Church is an institution that stands in vital and binding relations to what is outside of it. It may lie four-square and have all harmony of proportion within itself, but it must also have gates open on all sides, or it is no heavenly city.

II. The Church links the community to the nation. No Church fulfils its idea that does not do this. Every conception of the Church that can be drawn from Holy Scripture points to an identification of the Church and the nation. Such was the Church at the beginning, and such it will be in the end: a holy city, in whose light the nations of the saved shall walk, and into which they will bring their glory and honour. The relation may never again be formal, but more and more will it become real. The only reason why in the unfolding of society

Church and State may be formally separate is because the State is becoming moral and is working out those principles of righteousness, and mercy, and humanity for which the Church stands, separate, but coming under the same eternal laws and labouring for the same ends.

III. The Church stands in a vital relation to the past of its own history.

IV. The Church stands in near and definite relation to the Church of all ages.

V. The Church is linked to the Christian ages, to the true line of progress and to the truth that is worked out by the ages.

VI. The Church has a still higher relation. It is linked to the Churches and the community about it, to the nation, to its own past history, to the Church in all ages, and to the whole course of human society behind and forward. The abiding and all-determining relation of the Church is its relation to God and eternity. T. T. MUNGER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 1.

REFERENCE: xxi. 14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 534.

Chap. xxi., ver. 16.—"And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

"THE length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." There are then three directions or dimensions of human life to which we may fitly give these three names: length, and breadth, and height. The length of a life, in this meaning of it, is, of course, not its duration. It is rather the reaching on and out of a man in the line of activity, and thought, and self-development, which is indicated and prophesied by the character which is natural to him, by the special ambitions which spring up out of his special powers. It is the push of a life forward to its own personal ends and ambitions. The breadth of a life, on the other hand, is its outreach laterally, if we may say so. It is the constantly diffusive tendency which is always drawing a man outward into sympathy with other men. And the height of a life is its reach upward towards God; its sense of childhood; its consciousness of the Divine life over it, with which it tries to live in love, communion, and obedience. These are the three dimensions of a life,—its length, and breadth, and height,—without the due development of all of which no life becomes complete.

I Consider the length of life in this understanding of the word.

Here is a man who, as he comes to self-consciousness, recognises in himself a certain nature. He cannot be mistaken. Other men have their special powers and dispositions. As this young man studies himself he finds that he has his. That nature which he has discovered in himself decides for him his career. He says to himself, "Whatever I am to do in the world must be done in this direction." It is a fascinating discovery. It is an ever-memorable time for a man when he first makes it. It is almost as if a star woke to some subtle knowledge of itself, and felt within its shining frame the forces which decided what its orbit was to be. Because it is the star it is, that track through space must be its track. Out on that track it looks; along that line which sweeps through the great host of stars it sends out all its hopes; and all the rest of space is merely the field through which that track is flung: all the great host of stars is but the audience which waits to hear it as it goes singing on its way. So starts the young life which has come to self-discovery and found out what it has to do by finding out what it is. It starts to do that destined thing, to run out that appointed course. Nay, the man when he arrives at this self-discovery finds that his nature has not waited for him to recognise himself. What he is, even before he knows it, has decided what he does. It may be late in life before he learns to say of himself, "This is what I am." But then he looks back and discerns that, even without his knowing himself enough to have found it out, his life has run out in a line which had the promise and potency of its direction in the nature which his birth and education gave him. But if he does know it, the course is yet more definite and clear. Every act that he does is a new section of that line which runs between his nature and his appointed work. Just in proportion to the definiteness with which he has measured and understood himself is the sharpness of that line, which every thought, and act, and word is projecting a little further, through the host of human lives, towards the purpose of his living, towards the thing which he believes that he is sent into the world to do.

II. Look at the second dimension of life, which we call breadth. I have ventured to call this quality of breadth in a man's life its outreach laterally. When that tendency of which I have just been talking, the tendency of a man's career, the more loftily it is pursued, to bring him into sympathy and relationship with other men—when that tendency, I say, is consciously and deliberately acknowledged, and a man comes to

value his own personal career because of the way in which it relates him to his brethren and the help which it permits him to offer them, then his life has distinctly begun to open in this new direction, and to its length it has added breadth. When a man has length and breadth together, we feel at once how the two help each other. Length without breadth is narrow and hard; breadth without length, sympathy with others in a man who has no intense and clear direction for himself, is soft and weak. The man whom the world delights to find is the man who has evidently conceived some strong and distinct purpose for himself, from which he will allow nothing to turn his feet aside, who means to be something with all his soul, and yet who finds in his own earnest effort to fill out his own career the interpretation of the careers of other men, and also finds in sympathy with other men the transfiguration and sustainment of his own appointed struggle.

III. The height of life is its reach upward towards something distinctly greater than humanity. The height of life, its reach toward God, must be coextensive with, must be part of the one same symmetrical whole with, the length of life, or its reach towards its personal ambition, and the breadth of life, or its reach towards the sympathy of brother-lives. It is when a man begins to know the ambition of his life not simply as the choice of his own will, but as the wise assignment of God's love, and to know his relations to his brethren not simply as the result of his own impulsive affections, but as the seeking of his soul for their souls because they all belong to the great Father-soul—it is then that life for that man begins to lift itself all over, and to grow towards completion upward, through all its length and breadth. That is a noble time, a bewildering and exalting time, in any of our lives, when into everything that we are doing enters the Spirit of God; and thenceforth moving ever up towards the God to whom it belongs, that Spirit, dwelling in our life, carries our life up with it, not separating our life from the earth, but making every part of it while it still keeps its hold on earth soar up and have to do with heaven, so completing life in its height by making it Divine.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 110.

REFERENCES: xxi. 16.—J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 22; R. Collyer, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 184; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 138. xxi. 21.—Talmage, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 280; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 79. xxi. 22.—H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 129; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 401.

Chap. xxi., ver. 23.—"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof."

CHRIST the Light of all Scripture.

I. Consider how far the Christian conception of Christ accounts for the structure of Scripture prophecy. Deliverance from all evil, by means of the Son of man, who yet should suffer in delivering men—this was the idea of the first prophecy and the substance of the first hope. Already, then, we see faintly sketched the outline which all subsequent prophecy only filled up more clearly; already the Spirit of God was testifying to holy men of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. But along with this promise of a Deliverer, and necessarily springing out of it, another idea must have arisen in the minds of those who heard it: the idea of a Judge and an Avenger. The promise of Him who was to crush the serpent's head implied ere long a warning prophecy of Him who should crush the serpent's brood; and thus the very idea of salvation and deliverance gave rise in a world of impenitent and hardened sinners to that of judgment and retribution. And in this idea of the Christ that was to be, we have the key-note of all the prophecy that foretold Him.

II. But Scripture is history as well as prophecy. Is the Lamb the Light of this also? Does the idea of Christ account for the structure of the historical parts of Scripture? Now, in the first place, it is clear that from the moment that first prophecy to which we have referred was uttered it must have made for itself a history, the history of those that believed it as distinguished from the history of those that believed it not. All righteous men in God's kingdom of old, so far as they were righteous, were truly types of the Son of man yet to be revealed. As we peruse the history of God's kingdom among men, we see throughout it all, side by side with the idea of humanity ever tending, struggling upward towards God, the idea of Deity ever condescending to, ever allying itself with, man. Thus already does the great mystery of godliness, the union of the two natures, God manifest in the flesh, take almost visible shape and form before us, and thus the lines of mystery, like the lines of prophecy, are seen all to lead up to, and converge in, the God-Man, the incarnate Christ.

III. The Lamb is the Light of the law of Scripture. Either the ritual of the Jews was a Divine prophecy of the Atonement, or it was not Divine at all. For view the Jewish ritual apart

from any thought of a future atonement to be represented in it, look on it only as a system of worship appointed for men by God, and is it conceivable that the God we worship could have ever given it? We do not hesitate to say that, thus viewed, the ceremonial law of the Jews, with its blood-stained altars, its ruthless waste of innocent life, its burdensome ritual of minute and useless ceremonies, its vexatious and wanton restrictions, its severe and awful penalties for the slightest infraction of its many rules, is one of the most unmeaning, the most repulsive, the most childish of all human superstitions. But view it as a revelation in type and symbol of the atonement hereafter to be effected by the sacrifice of Christ, and it becomes a picture so minutely accurate, a prophecy so extensively and yet so entirely true of all those good things to come, "a pattern of heavenly things" so exquisitely perfect, that it cannot have been given by any save by Him who from everlasting had designed alike the true and heavenly tabernacle and this its earthly and prophetic shadow.

W. C. MAGEE, *Christ the Light of all Scripture*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxi. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 583; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 355. xxi. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1590; J. Aldis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 257. xxii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1233; W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 46; G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 410.

Chap. xxii., ver. 3.—"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him."

THE Service of God.

I. If we call Christ Saviour, we must also call Him King; we must not pick and choose among the elements of the Gospel, and cast aside such parts of it as may press too hardly on our own craving to have our own way. Even when, in some most comfortable words, He bids us to come unto Him, and promises rest and relief from a heavy load, it is on the condition of taking upon us instead His easy yoke and light burden. The relation between a bondservant, or slave, and a master whose rights over him were absolute, a relation which Christianity was to undermine, but which for the time was suffered to exist, is utilised, so to speak, for the purpose of enforcing this great lesson. Four times does St. Paul, himself the Apostle, as he is called, of spiritual freedom, adopt the title of "a slave of

God," or of Christ, a title used also by St. Peter, by St. John, by St. James, and by St. Jude. It is remarkable, too, that in the text the expressions are combined, "His servants shall do Him service for wages."

II. This thought will brighten and elevate the homeliest forms of every-day duty by bringing them under the obligation of personal service to a most equitable and Divinely generous Lord. We can do anything that is good and innocent, and everything that is part of our daily duty, as unto Him. Yes, and all helpful service of men will find fresh motive-power in the service of their and our Saviour. We shall be in a true sense serving Him when we are serving our fellow-men in Him and for His sake.

W. BRIGHT, *Morality in Doctrine*, p. 130.

Chap. xxii., ver. 3.—"And there shall be no more curse."

THUS, we see, the book closes where it begins. This text embodies all that is contained between its two covers. We have got back to Eden at last; we have got back to the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, and to the river of the water of life, and to the land of gold. Very long has been the wandering of the sad human family, the poor, unhappy, cursed, afflicted human race, but the end is reached, and although the curse was pronounced at the beginning, the winding up of all, the close of the matter, is that there is no curse. Consider, then, the curse, its origin, its nature, its penalty, the method of its repeal, and the prospects which its repeal opens to the eyes of believers.

I. The curse is visible. There is a pestilence that walks in darkness; there is a destruction that wastes at noonday; there is the law of sin and death, in which the curse of God is. Remark, again, how it reigns. The region of the curse is the region of the law; it is the region of tribulation and anguish. If we are in the region of the law, we are where the fire burns, and the storm tosses, and the steel pierces, and the poison kills, and the lightning cleaves, and time frightens by its limitations, and space by its contradictions and contractions. On some Mount Carmel God is always answering by fire, and the red curse of the wrath is manifested.

II. "There shall be no more curse." What is implied in this removal? Why, in fact, all experience here tends to teach it concisely. Now, you are to understand that Christ is the great power of God. You perhaps say, "That is nothing new."

No, it is not, but it needs to be affirmed and asserted again and again with power. The whole nature of our redemption has no other end but to remove and extinguish the wrath that is between God and man. When that is removed, man is reconciled to God. Where the wrath is, there is that which must be atoned for; there is the cause of the separation between God and man; there is that which Christ came into the world to extinguish.

III. "There shall be no more curse." The sailor longing to set sail passes to and fro upon the shore, waiting the return of the tide, for when the tide returns the ship shall clear the harbour, and fly before the wind, and hasten home, and man can calculate the return of the tide; the astronomer, curious in speculation, waits upon his watch-tower, and notes in the heavenly places beyond the return of a planet or a comet, and by signs he can forecast the return of a luminary to its place in these skies; the feet of affection pace the stones of the station, waiting the return of the train, that the weary heart may be refreshed by the old face, and man can calculate the return of a train. But what of the return of a soul, nay, the return of a race of souls to their home and their allegiance, like weary birds returning to their rest? Then the strain of a glad universe shall be, "No more curse, no more pain, no more separation of lovers and friends, no more sickness, no more sighing, and no more death!" "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 375.

Chap. xxii., ver. 3.—"And His servants shall serve Him."

THE Services of Heaven.

This promise, or prophecy (to a child of God, all promises are prophecies, and prophecies are promises), this prophetical promise, is the last and the best in the Bible. It seems purposely reserved to be the crowning point, for to be with God, to be near God, to see God, to know God, to enjoy God, to be like God, are all subordinate to serving God! But we must unlearn our common ideas, if we would understand this. For "service" has been so abused, by the unfaithfulness of the servants and the inconsideration and severity of the service, that the very name of "service" is degraded.

I. When this promise is to take effect, and that perfect "service" is to begin, it would be presumptuous to attempt to define too accurately. We must be careful in lifting the veil

which screens the sanctuary. Yet it is no forbidden curiosity which follows longingly and lovingly those who are gone, and which yearns to ask, "Where are they? What are they doing? Are they cognisant of us? Though we cannot see them, is there any actual communion with us now? In their quiet resting-places, are they engaged, and how? Or is all action suspended a while, and do they wait for us?" This paradise—where the disembodied souls of the saints are till the Second Advent, as we gather from the intimations which are given to us—is characteristically a state of rest—of rest as in some measure contrasted with, and preparatory to, that state of active enjoyment which we shall have when we have regained our bodies, and of which these bodies are the necessary instruments. The images, which are used to describe the condition immediately after death, all point to rest. Seven times we have the expression, "enter into rest." And even sleep is used as the metaphor of death. And we have the analogy of the Sabbath-day and of the entrance into the land of Canaan; and it seems a gracious and fit arrangement, and according to God's tender mercy, and it commends itself to our feelings and experiences, that, after the toils and conflicts of life, there should be a season of special repose and refreshment. It is not to be believed for a moment that this interval is a time of unconsciousness or dull nonentity. St. Paul would not have hesitated, as he did, in his letter to the Philippians, whether it was better to live or die, if the state after death till the resurrection were a state of inaction. It would be better, certainly, to a mind such as his to remain here and work, than to be nothing and do nothing for a great many years. But the rest of paradise, as I believe, will be such a rest as the Christian needs and loves, passed with Christ, contemplating Christ, delighting in Christ, learning from Christ, properly learning, especially such things as shall be needed for future service. Nor can I conceive that even this quiet period shall be altogether without activity, for we are so constituted that we can hardly think of a sphere of positive enjoyment not combined with action. But rather will it be such employment as is most restful. We have the two beautifully blended in that description of the souls in paradise, which is perhaps given us for this very end, to show the union, "They rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

II. During that "resting" period, it is pleasant to us to know that they and we are in perfect sympathy in the longing which

the whole Church has for the Advent. We are looking to the same point on the horizon, for they too expect, in the perfection of their being, to rise. "How long? How long?" "Even we"—as St. Paul says of us—"who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." But when He shall come in whose presence when He lived upon earth all death awoke to life, on that great Easter morning, the souls of saints which sleep shall rise in the springtide of their beauty, and each soul shall mate itself again to its body, no longer, as now, a clog, to drag it down to the dust, but to be wings to its joy, to do all its will; then shall our perfected and glorified being begin to fulfil the far end of its existence: "His servants shall serve Him."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 69.

REFERENCE: xxii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1576.

Chap. xxii., vers. 3, 5.—"His servants shall serve Him, . . . and they shall reign for ever and ever."

SERVITUDE and Royalty.

I. "His servants shall serve Him." Such is the title of the glorified. In heaven itself there is no emancipation from the bonds of God. The holy nations are eternally bound in absolute obligation to the will of God and of the Lamb. It is no part of the Creator's promise to raise, to educate, the creature to independence, to self-dependence. That could not be without a profound and fatal contradiction. The created soul could not be the basis of its own being, nor could it be the source of its own joy and power or the law of its own eternity. We read what is but likely when we read that the nearer and the clearer is the sight of the Creator granted to the creature, the better the creature recognises the blessedness of self-surrender. The nearer the approach, the more entire the service. Even within the most living circles of the Christian Church just now the sense of duty surely is not at its strongest. The will to do our Divine Master's will, not our liking, but His bidding; the sober strength of Christian character; the weight and fixity of principle; the jealousy that conscience is kept void of offence in the plain duties of the common day—these are not things so often to be found. Nevertheless these things are essentials in the seed sown here which is to issue in the life of heaven. For it is written that His servants there shall serve Him still.

II. "They shall reign for ever and ever." Such is the twin promise of the better life. The bondmen of the Eternal, in that existence of endless duty, shall for ever reign. Even in the present world the true servant of God, in proportion to the reality and simplicity of his servitude, receives some foretastes of his royalty. There is no independence upon earth so strong, and so nobly strong, as that of a Christian who wills wholly to be Christ's servant.

H. C. G. MOULE, *Christ is All*, p. 203.

REFERENCES: xxii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 824; J. B. Lightfoot, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 369; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 308. xxii. 4, 5.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 282. xxii. 5.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 57; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 200; G. W. Conder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 44; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 52. xxii. 7.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 437.

Chap. xxii., vers. 10-12.

THE Love of Goodness the Safeguard of Faith.

I. Observe, our Lord says, the "time is at hand," and "I come quickly," although in the preceding prophecy the course of trials to which the Church would be exposed is described as running through a long succession of ages. Undoubtedly to every reader of these words in every age the time is at hand, and his Lord is coming quickly: his own time of watching, of trial, of temptation, is passing away with every hour; and the longer we live, the shorter seems the period which we have lived through, and the space between our life and our death seems continually a more insignificant point in the midst of eternity. But the more literal sense of the words of the text seems to imply that the end of the world was near at hand when compared with the period that had elapsed since its first creation. Whether this be so or not is far beyond the reach of human foresight; but the exceeding rapidity with which society has been moving forward in the last three centuries seems to show that man's work of replenishing the earth must, in the common course of things, be accomplished before much more than two thousand years from the time of Christ's coming shall have passed away.

II. It cannot be too often repeated that it is nothing but a thorough love of righteousness and goodness that can, with the blessing of God, keep our faith alive. To a good man the evidence of the Gospel is abundantly satisfactory; to a bad man it seems to have no force at all. Unless our principles support

our faith, our faith will not long support our principles. "He that is holy, let him be holy still." He will grow steadier and steadier in his faith in proportion, as he dreads sin more and is more watchful over his life, and heart, and temper, and learns to deny himself and to love his neighbour, and thus become more and more conformed to the Spirit of God.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 118.

Chap. xxii., ver. 11.—"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

THE End of our Probation.

The very pole on which all Christian morality turns is just this: we must be judged "according to our works," the "things done in the body," by which we must understand comprehensively all the realities of conduct, not things done only in contrast with words spoken or thoughts harboured. The whole sum of inward and outward realities goes to make up the man as judgment will find him. They all tend alike to strike the balance of character, of which human justice takes, as it needs must, but an imperfect account, but which Divine justice will sum, and weigh, and measure perfectly.

I. From all these elements of thought, word, and deed, the text seems to teach that there results a character fixed and determined, and which, by the laws of God's moral universe, must abide for evermore. Nothing can change the unjust and filthy into the righteous and holy character; nothing can vitiate or blemish perfect righteousness and holiness when completed in its course of development and ratified by God's judgment. This truth stands on an even broader basis than that which Christianity itself has reached. Those under the law of habit outnumber those under the law of Christ.

II. But further Holy Scripture teaches that that judgment not only pronounces and decides, but actually separates between the righteous and the wicked. The mixed state, good and evil, so full of hopeful and yet of fearful elements, cannot last for ever. If it be prolonged indefinitely in other moral spheres of creation, yet for us it must cease, and that soon. Look, while you may, on the lovely side of God's eternal promise. There fix heart and hope, till you become persuaded of it and embrace it.

H. HAYMAN, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 77.

REFERENCES: xxii. 11.—A. Dawe, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 234; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 319.

Chap. xxii., ver. 13.—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

CHRIST the Alpha and Omega.

I. Christ is the Alpha and Omega in relation to Christianity and providence. Christianity is at this day the great upholder of Theism in the world. It has unspeakably distanced Judaism, whose testimony against idolatry it has taken up, and also Mahometanism, whose witness for the unity of God is nowhere going forth with visible conquering power. But Christianity is more than simple Theism. There is a Trinity in its unity, and this gives it a richness, a grandeur, an adaptability to the fallen state of man, of which mere Theism is incapable. Hence the Son shines in the Christian firmament as the true God along with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and thus the Divine works of creation and providence are connected with His name. Over the wide universe everything shall at last be found to be under Christ's feet, not necessarily in the way of loyal subjection, but in the way of bearing witness to one ascendant will, which orders all things, even evil, for the best.

II. Christ is the Alpha and Omega in relation to redemption. He is the Alpha and Omega in regard to redemption—(1) as a Divine saving plan. We cannot ascend to the origin of this plan, for it is from eternity. But, as far as we can rise, Christ is seen to be its fountain-head, and with His purpose of devotement it is bound up. (2) As a personal Christian experience. When is it that any one of us becomes a Christian? Is it not when Christ draws near and talks to us, as to the disciples on their way? We have no experimental Christianity apart from Him. (3) As a collective spiritual history. Christianity was never intended to be a solitary experience or a multitude of single experiences. It was to be a society, a Church. And He who bears up the Church so long in such a world must be nothing less than Divine. It was the saying of Voltaire that Christianity would not survive the nineteenth century; but what has the nineteenth century not done for Christianity? It has sent the Gospel anew into all the world. It has gathered in the islands of the South, and shaken the mighty pagan faiths of India, China, and Japan. It has stirred up its missionaries from the far West to preach the old faith in Egypt and in Palestine, and where the disciples first received the Christian name. It has devoted its noblest children to face death for Christ in depths of Africa which Voltaire never heard of; and

it has even employed the press at Ferney that printed his own works, and, it may be, this very prophecy against the Gospel, to publish in new tongues the true oracles of God. (4) Considered as an endless development. When we speak of eternity, we feel that we are dealing with a quantity which, whether as applied to man's natural endowments or destiny in Christ, overtasks all our powers alike of conception and description. Christ "openeth, and no man shutteth," holding in His hands "the golden key that opes the palace of eternity."

J. CAIRNS, *Christ the Morning Star, and Other Sermons*, p. 18.

REFERENCE: xxii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 546.

Chap. xxii., ver. 14 (R.V.).—"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city."

THE Last Beatitude of the Ascended Christ.

I. If we are clean, it is because we have been made so. The first beatitude that Jesus Christ spoke from the mountain was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; the last beatitude that He speaks from heaven is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." And the act commended in the last is but the outcome of the spirit extolled in the first. For they who are poor in spirit are such as know themselves to be sinful men; and those who know themselves to be sinful men are they who will cleanse their robes in the blood of Jesus Christ. (1) This mysterious robe, which answers nearly to what we mean by character, is made by the wearer. (2) All the robes are foul. (3) The foul robes can be cleansed; character may be sanctified and elevated.

II. The second thought that I would suggest is that these cleansed ones, and by implication these only, have unrestrained access to the source of light: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life." That of course carries us back to the old mysterious narrative at the beginning of the book of Genesis. The tree of life stands as the symbol here of an external source of life. I take "life" to be used here in what I believe to be its predominant New Testament meaning, not bare continuance in existence, but a full, blessed perfection and activity of all the faculties and possibilities of the man, which this very Apostle himself identifies with the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. And that life, says John, has an external source in heaven, as on earth.

III. Those who are cleansed, and they only, have entrance

into the society of the city. The city is the emblem of security and of permanence. No more shall life be as a desert march, with changes which only bring sorrow, and yet a dreary monotony amidst them all. We shall dwell with abiding realities, ourselves fixed in unchanging, but ever-growing, completeness and peace. The tents shall be done with; we shall inhabit the solid mansions of the city which hath foundations, and shall wonderingly exclaim, as our unaccustomed eyes gaze on their indestructible strength, "What manner of stones and what buildings are here?" And not one stone of these shall be thrown down.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 43.

REFERENCE: xxii. 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 369.

Chap. xxii., ver. 16.—"The bright and morning star."

Two important lessons may be learned from this subject:—

I. All Christians should seek to be sons of the morning. As lamps do not talk, but shine, so should religion shine forth in beneficent and useful lives.

II. We should be striving to make others share in the blessed privileges which we ourselves enjoy. Christians may be saying, both by word and by example, to all with whom they come in contact, "We are travelling eastward to the land of the morning." A new glory is thrown round the Christian character while seeking to make known to others the perfections of God's love and mercy. In order that we may each shine in our measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often towards Him from whom our light is derived.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 59.

Chap. xxii., ver. 16.—"The morning star."

WHEN Christ rose from the grave, it was not, properly speaking, the Church's sunrise: that has not yet taken place; that will be when He comes again, in the blaze of His glory—one universal glow, like the morning spread upon the mountains. But what rose was that beautiful "star" which harbingers the sunrise, making the early dawn and telling us that the day is coming: its pledge and earnest. Mark the differences. When Christ came out of His grave, it was "not with observation." It was silent and unnoticed. When He shall come again in His kingdom, it will be with the archangel's trump, visible and refulgent, even "as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven," even as "the morning star" steals upon the night,

but the sun rises in his full-orbed splendour. And when Christ walked this earth after His resurrection, it was light, sweet light; but it was partial light, light to a few, light shrouded, light mingled with the darkness. But when He returns it will be a radiant world: "The Lamb will be the Light thereof;" just as "the morning star" shines in twilight, but when the sun comes it is all a sea of brightness. And the risen Christ was to set again; He appeared for a little while, and then He passed away with the light of the Spirit, which shone—we have His own authority for saying it—which shone more brightly than His own. But when He comes back again the light of His presence will never go out; like as "the morning star" sheds its ray for a little space, but the orb of day rolls on in his might, and "rejoices as a giant to run his course." And Christ's mission after He rose was chiefly to speak of the things of the kingdom, to tell of another breaking of love and joy upon this earth, the pioneer to a happier day, again true to the parable of nature, for the "morning star" seems made for little else but to proclaim that the day is coming to us.

I. Now, see it thus in your heart, if "the Lord is risen upon you." The light is there. And there is a distinct, clear beam. But as yet the chief effect of that is twofold: it makes the darkness of your heart more perceptible and more felt, and your desires are being sent on by it more longingly for a day which it testifies to you to be very near. Therefore avoid two mistakes. Do not think that you are not risen, or rather that Christ is not risen in you, because there is much surrounding darkness in your soul, and you feel that darkness deeper and drearier than you ever felt it before. That sense of darkness is an index of "the morning star." Without "the star" you would scarcely know that it was dark. Only, it shows that it is not yet day, not that "perfect day" for which we look. On the other hand, do not expect to live a resurrection-day as if it were an ascension-day. We are now living a resurrection-life, as many of us as are indeed baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ; and every Easter comes to remind us of our resurrection-life, and every Easter we should get a little higher than before. A believer's life is full of resurrections. But persons sometimes speak of resurrection-life as if it were to be a life of confidence and no fear, all praise and no prayer; but it is just because it is resurrection-life that you are to walk humbly, watchfully, expectingly. Resurrection-life is

spiritual, but it is not glorified, just as our Lord in "the forty days" was spiritual, but not glorified till He ascended into the heavens. You are under "the bright and morning star," but you have not yet the sun.

II. And here is the solution of the secret of our earth in its present state. There is the light of the truth in this world, light just enough to show that more light is wanted, and what light can be, and what light will be. But the light of truth is straggling in the best; sometimes it seems nothing to cope with the thickness of the error and the wickedness which are about on every side. It can scarcely penetrate it. Nevertheless the light shows God's presence and God's faithfulness; and it keeps faith and hope alive, for it is the interval of the reign of the "morning star" before the sun comes. "But," you say, "is this all that Christ is to His Church now: only a star?" Yes, by comparison with what He will be. But, remember, "the morning star" makes the daybreak sure; and "the morning star" is lovely and brilliant compared to the midnight that would be without it: and nobody can tell what the state of this world would be without the direct and indirect rays of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. But let me reduce the image to one or two practical instructions. Christ gradually develops. The believer's light gradually but certainly increases. It was not a sun, but a "star," that shone on Bethlehem; and the sun itself pales and loses itself in the new Jerusalem, before that brightness where "the Lamb is the Light thereof." It is "the morning star." Every lesson of Easter Day is a lesson of earliness. The women were early; the angels were early; Christ was early. "The morning star" is early. To a Christian view every new morning, as it springs out of night, is a little resurrection. Let it find you early, since it is the characteristic of the things that are high that they are early. Resurrection and earliness go together. They say that in nature all vegetation springs the fastest and makes its largest shoots in the very early mornings. And it is a fact as certain in grace as it is in nature that in due time the "morning star" becomes the "evening star," and he who in his youth has had the "morning star" will find it his "evening star" in his age and death. And life ought to be a joyous thing. True, it is in the midst of things that are within and without still steeped in sorrow; but the path of religion is a line of light, which falls true athwart the darkness; and every Christian walking there,

catching something of the brightness of "the morning star," is to be himself in this world a reflection to break the gloom and speak for God. He stands in the track of the promises; and he should be a man radiant in his spirit. Nevertheless, however many your joys may be, the best of this world is, after all, twilight. Some of us know it too well. The clouds that wrap us in are still so black, the sin within, the trials and perplexities around us, our own and others' griefs. But if Jesus has risen in your soul, I tell you, by that faint streak of light, however faint, it is morning, real morning, a morning that will never quite darken over again. There are, and there will be, shadows till He comes; but, by the token of that faint light, "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 165.

Chap. xxii., ver. 16.—"I am . . . the bright and morning star"; with ii., ver. 28: "And I will give him the morning star."

THE book of Revelation has a peculiar charm which all readers of Scripture more or less feel. It attracts the child by its shifting scenes, its bright pictures, its grand, mysterious glimpses of the future. It satisfies the man of more mature understanding and taste with the lofty truth and harmony that reigns all through its mighty world of symbols and visions—a world which exhausts the stores of the Old Testament, and then imagines new. In more senses than one this book is the "revelation of Jesus Christ." No part of the Bible so fully unfolds the glories of His reign, adorns Him with such a profusion of titles, or pours out such a tide of love and adoration on His person. The style is transfigured, like the person, adding to the depth and tenderness of the Gospel the lofty sweep and rich colouring of the prophets. The whole book is, as it were, linked together by the one grand figure of the first of our texts, taken from the close: "I am the bright and morning star," as it returns upon its beginning: "And I will give him the bright and morning star."

1. Christ is to His people the morning star of time, and will be to them the morning star of eternity, because His light shines after darkness. Every sinner to whom Christ has not appeared walks in darkness. All Christians alike have come out of darkness, and come out of it at the signal of Christ's rising. All trace the grand transition to His appearing in their day, and with a full and swelling heart take up the same words of thanksgiving: "Through the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high hath visited us."

II. Christ is to His people the morning star of time, and will be to them the morning star of eternity, because His light transcends all comparison. "In all things He hath the pre-eminence." Christ is pre-eminent—(1) in His titles; (2) in His offices; (3) in His history. (4) What He is to His people, He is alone.

III. Christ is the morning star of time, and will be the morning star of eternity, because His light ushers in perpetual day. Christ is not compared to the evening star, though it be in itself as bright as that of the morning, and indeed the same, because in that case the associations would be too gloomy, and the victory would seem to remain for a time on the side of darkness. With Christ as the morning star, the victory is decided from the first, and Night can never resume her ancient empire. The dawn may be overcast, but the day still proceeds.

J. CAIRNS, *Christ the Morning Star, and Other Sermons*, p. 1.

Chap. xxii., vers. 16, 17.

I. MAN is so constituted by his Maker as to have the power, when any course of action is proposed to him, to determine and decide whether he will accept the advice and act on it or not. He may say, "I will" or "I will not," when the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." At the same time, man is not to forget that, although he has the control of his will, his volitions are nevertheless influenced by motives; and therefore to our motives much attention is due. Some strong counteracting motive must exist if a man shall refuse to attempt what it is obviously his interest to do. Hence it is that it becomes important for us to consider not only what a man is invited to, but also what he is called from. When he refuses an invitation to draw near to the King of kings, we must seek to understand what motive exists to prevent his coming.

II. When the Spirit and the bride say, "Come," you are not of necessity called from the business of the world or from those worldly advantages and enjoyments which business is undertaken to procure. If business be allowable, it is allowable also, within the prescribed boundaries, to enjoy the fruits of your industry. The Spirit and the bride call you from that absorption in worldly business which leaves you no time, no mind, for high and holy thoughts on high and heavenly subjects, no time, no mind, to reflect upon life and death, upon time and eternity, upon heaven and hell, upon salvation and a Saviour, upon damnation and Satan.

III. To whom are we called? We are called to Him who in our text describes Himself as the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star. We are launched on a troublous ocean. Many conflicting duties must occupy our attention and thoughts. Therefore our eyes must be fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the star which shines in all the brightness of the Deity; we must look to His guidance by studying the sacred Scriptures, so that we may steer our course according to the principles which for our direction and guidance are there revealed. To this we are called by the Spirit and the bride.

W. F. Hook, *Parish Sermons*, p. 352.

Chap. xxii., ver. 17.—"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The Will.

I. We must believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. We see it in nature. With whom took He counsel in creation? It was at His sovereign will the Himalayas raised their heads; it was at His sovereign will the depths of the ocean were dug deep. We see it in providence. He gives or withholds the rain; causes one child to be born in a palace and another in a hovel. Nor has He abdicated His sovereignty in the sphere of grace. His purposes stand fast; His will must be done. But I believe also that man is a moral agent, endowed with the instinct of will, not a mere puppet in the hand of fate. We are not Mahometans, and we do not believe in a Kismet from which there is no escape. We acknowledge the harmony that must exist between the sovereignty of God and the will of man in nature, as, for example, in the case of the farmer. We know he may plough in vain and sow in vain unless God grants the rain and the sunshine, that the harvest is absolutely in God's hands; but we also know that if the farmer therefore folds his hands and neither ploughs nor sows, his barns will be empty in the harvest-time. These two things are quite compatible: the Divine sovereignty and the free agency of man; and herein consists the glory of God. He performs His purposes not by mere machines, but by living moral agents, who have this power of will. We all acknowledge that the power of the statesman, who moulds the will of the people, is of a higher order than the power of the blacksmith, who moulds a dead, resistless piece of iron to his purpose. So

God carries out His own will, though liable to be crossed at every turn by the will of man.

II. (1) The will of man is conditioned by his creation. God's will as Creator is absolute. Man's individuality, the basis of his character and of his faculties, is given to him by his Creator; and no human being can attain a higher degree of perfection than has been planned for him in the possibilities of existence. (2) His will is conditioned, not only by creation, but by heredity. It was by this law of heredity that Adam's sin was transmitted to the generations yet unborn, and rendered it harder for every son of man to refuse the evil and choose the good. (3) The will of man is conditioned also by his surroundings.

III. Two things were put before man between which he was to choose: a life in God and a life in the world independent of God. And there were implanted within him two impulses: one towards the world, which sought only for happiness, to appropriate as much as possible to one's self; the other towards God, which sought rather for blessedness, and which found its centre not in self or in the world, but in God. Man chose the worldly impulse, which led to a life centred either in the world or in self, and now the things which should have been for our wealth have become to us an occasion of falling. It is the Spirit of God who strengthens the impulses towards holiness, towards God. Yield to them, and they will become stronger and stronger; resist them, and you will become stronger towards evil, until you become Gospel-hardened, and the grieved, rejected Spirit of God leaves you to the doom which your own will has chosen.

E. A. STUART, *Children of God*, p. 159.

MAN Unwilling to be Saved.

The free, unlimited offer of the Gospel necessarily involves a provision for all human wants, a removal of all external obstacles, a provision of unlimited value and unrestricted sufficiency, a provision within the reach of every one to whom it is presented, and who is charged with its acceptance upon the peril of eternal death. For ourselves, we cannot see how we can separate such an offer from man's responsibility as to the result. The two doctrines must stand or fall together. If it is true that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely, it must be true that if man partakes not, it is because he will not.

I. The difficulties of religion are not found in its obscurities;

the insuperable obstacles to obedience are not found in any outward circumstances. A child has understood the Gospel so as to embrace it, and men have walked with God in the midst of abounding sensuality and crime. But those difficulties are found in the spirituality of the Gospel, in the holiness of its principles, and the self-denying nature of its duties; the child of sense will not govern himself by faith, the being of earthliness will not submit to spiritual influences, and the slave of appetite will not put a curb upon his passions. Did men but love the truth as they love error, love holiness as they love sin, regard the glory of God as they do their selfish gratifications, the obstacles to religion would vanish, and the path of life would be as plain and easy to travel as is now the path into which their desires lead them.

II. This doctrine of man's responsibility for his own salvation is not only uncontradicted by, but is in perfect keeping with, the entire strain of the inspired record. Men take refuge in God's election only that they may garnish and persevere in their own election, and every man ought to know better, and does know better, than to say, "If I am not elected, I cannot be saved."

E. MASON, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 294.

Chap. xxii., ver. 17.—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

Two voices are distinguished by St. John in his trance as going forth into the world with invitation and appeal, not one, but two, an outward and an inward: those of the Spirit and the bride. There are two things, the within and the without; even when an idea is communicated from one to another, there are the idea of the communicator and the idea of the recipient.

I. So it is always that the Spirit becomes audible and impressive and receives power, namely, through a form. A bride has to be found for it to make it vocal and to enable it to speak movingly. One cannot help thinking at times of the amount of latent power that sleeps around us in sensations and emotions as well as in visions and ideas which are never expressed, of the possible effects if that which some silent or stuttering souls are seeing and feeling could be adequately articulated, of the untold life stories, of the untold heart experiences, as well as brain dreams, the true and perfect telling of which would thrill us deeply. We are constantly missing much that would rouse, or pierce, or melt, because, forsooth, the Spirit lacks the bride.

II. But consider again. Here are certain beautiful ideas, such as ideas of truth, fidelity, generosity, heroism, love, self-

sacrifice and devotion. We can revolve and brood on these, but what is it that makes them flash and burn, and causes us to be penetrated with them? Is it not their embodiment in some witnessed or reported deed, in some human life and character? The cross, at all events, has been of great importance in lifting the transcendent Jesus into view, in aiding His transcendent spirit to attract and captivate. His tragic and pathetic end has been the bride through which the voice of His incomparable work and sweetness has been heard and has prevailed. What the Spirit wants always, in order that it may be present among us, is just a Man; the power of Christianity is the Man Jesus Christ. S. A. TIPPLE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 328.

WHAT is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper?

When a man considers with himself whether he ought to present himself at the Lord's Table, frequently he is beset with a host of difficulties and questions as to what is required of him and as to his own fitness. Where shall he go for safe guidance? I reply that he need go no further than the catechism which he learnt as a child.

I. It is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper "to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life." Beyond all doubt this must be required, and it is a most reasonable requirement, for, to take no higher view of the Sacrament than this, we may regard it as a mutual pledge given by Christians to each other that they will keep the commands of Christ. The requisites for coming to the Lord's Table are identically the same with the requisites for being a Christian in life and reality, and not only in name.

II. It is required that those who come to the Lord's Supper should "have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death." This is clearly only that duty which is required of every one who desires to call himself without profanity and without hypocrisy by the holy name of Christ.

III. Those who come to the Lord's Supper must "be in charity with all men." Quite a reasonable requirement this, if we remember that the Lord's Supper was regarded from the earliest times as a feast of love or charity. In confessing that he is unfit for the Lord's Supper, a man is really confessing that he is unworthy to be called a Christian at all.

HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 132.

THE Drawings of the Spirit.

I. At the time when St. John wrote, the Church had just passed into the dispensation of the Spirit. The Old Testament was evidently the dispensation of the Father, looking on to the Son. Then came the revelation—I do not call it the dispensation—the revelation of the Son, short, eloquent, beautiful, preparing the way for the dispensation of the Spirit. That dispensation commenced at the ascension of Christ, when, according to His promise, He poured out the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. From that date it has been emphatically the era of the Spirit, the era of the dispensation under which we are now placed. How much longer it will last we do not know. But then will come in all its fulness the dispensation of Jesus Christ, that glorious and wonderful period to which all prophecy points its finger, and to which the dispensation of the Spirit now is preparatory. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." And you must remember that the dispensation of the Spirit is higher, more powerful, more responsible, than the dispensation of the Gospel during the life of Christ upon earth. Therefore Christ said to His disciples, "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto My Father." Even so it came to pass; for whereas Christ did not certainly in His own person convert more than five hundred, the Spirit scarcely arrived but in one single day He converted three thousand. And for the same reason Christ also added those otherwise strange and almost incomprehensible words, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you," showing again that the dispensation of the Spirit was greater than Christ's own personal ministry in His humiliation. So once more, and still stronger, He said, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Therefore we may reverently say that up to this moment what the Spirit says and what the Spirit does, whatever it be, is the best of anything that has ever yet been upon the face of this earth. Hence it is matter of the deepest joy, and worthy to stand where it does, at the very close and summit of the revelation, that what the Holy Ghost says is "Come."

II. The Father sends many a gracious providence, some sad, some happy; but it is the Spirit who gives the providence its

voice. The Son exhibits the marvellous spectacle of the cross, and Himself hanging thereon; but it is the Spirit which makes that cross to speak to the poor sinner's heart: "Come." For the Spirit is that which first makes an unseen thing a substance to the mind, and then changes the substance from a thing without to a reality which lives in a man's soul and mingles with his being. It is quite certain that very generally it is the bride which is the organ of the Spirit's voice. I suppose that there have been instances in which a man has been converted to God by the Bible and the Spirit within him without the operation of any human agency whatever. Doubtless God may do so, and I think I have read or heard of some such proofs of God's sovereignty and sufficiency; but they are to the last degree rare. It is the bride who is essentially the Spirit's organ, that gives effect to the Spirit's will: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

III. And who is "the bride"? A beautiful body, knit together in one holy fellowship, pure and spotless, spotless in God's eyes for His sake who loves her, "arrayed in the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints," and decked with the ornaments of grace. She has accepted Christ for her Beloved, and is bound to Him in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten. In Him she has merged her name, her nature, her property, her being; while He pays all her debts, pledges Himself for all her wants, sustains her with His arm, satisfies her with His love. It is the Church, elected by grace, united by faith, sealed by baptism, kept by mercy, prepared for glory. And it is the Church, holding the Spirit, representing the Spirit, used by the Spirit, whose high part and privilege it is to be for ever crying, "Come, come." It is very difficult to determine whether when Christ said, as He stood on the margin of His glory, leaving it as His last injunction to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," the command was limited to the ordained. The sequel, "baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," would lead us to say that it was confined to the ordained; but, on the other hand, the whole tone and spirit, as well as many express injunctions of the Gospel, make it certain that every one who is called is to be a caller, that we are all propagators of the truth, and that as "every man would receive the gift, so must he minister the same, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God." Therefore in some sense it is certain that the direction holds to the whole Church, "Go ye

into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Sad were it for that person, whoever he might be, who was excluded from that highest and holiest title that is ever worn upon this earth, a missionary. But there appears to me to be a great truth in this fact: that it is the whole Church which is represented as saying that word "Come," the Church in its collective capacity, not as broken up into individuals. It is not this or that person, but the whole bride, that says, "Come." See two consequences. (1) The Church is meant to act, and ought to act, in missionary work, as a Church in its integrity, as one complete body. Would that there were such union, the whole Church going forth as a Church to the work of missions, and doing it as a distinct part of her system! There is not; there is none. If ever there is a pure Church, and if missions are needed then, doubtless we shall then work together as one in our completeness. As the bride is one, so will the Spirit be one, and the machinery one, and the voice one. And it will be a sweet and heavenly concord of sound, like music upon water: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." (2) But there is another and pleasant thought in the words. Is not the act or the word, the prayer or the appeal, every effort to do good, of one member of the Church, the exponent and the representative, and therefore the embodiment, of the whole Church? Is it not the Church's way of putting itself forth to you? And therefore is not that action of one individual as if it were the action of the whole Church? Has not it in it the strength of the whole Church? It may be a comfort to some one who is labouring for God, in much-felt weakness and in barren solitude, to recollect, "I am part of the whole Church catholic; it is the Church that speaks and moves even in me, poor, miserable sinner that I am. There is all the power of the Church, the Head and the members, with me. It is not I, but it. The limb may well take strength from its union with the body, and the wave that breaks upon the shore has behind it the strength of the mighty ocean. And so it shall be the Church's voice by me: 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come.'"

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 212.

REFERENCES: xxii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 279; vol. viii., No. 442; vol. xxiii., No. 1331; vol. xxvii., No. 1608; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 165; Talmage, *Old Wells Dug Out*, p. 332; *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 270; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 329. xxii. 20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 79. xxii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1618.

Date Due

6660

BV
4225
.S4
v.12

TITLE
The Sermon Bible
I Peter - Revelation

67 84

DATE | BORROWER'S NAME | DATE RETURNED

The Sermon Bible

LIBRARY
OF
CONGRESS

6660